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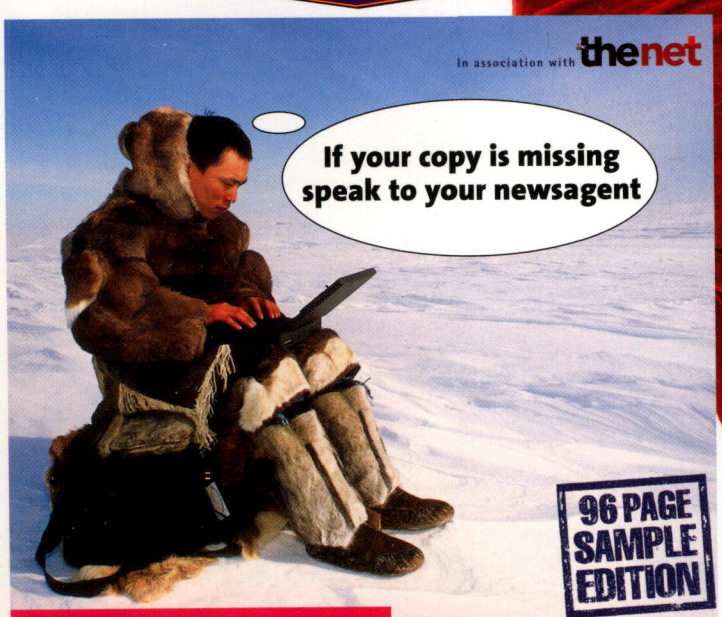

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thenet

Flick before you click

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COVER PHOTOGRAPH: SVEN ARNSTEINN/STAY STILL

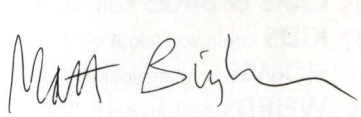
A monthly fee covers all calls to the Internet – allegedly

Imagine you hired a car with unlimited mileage and set off to drive around the world. But halfway across Russia, the hire company caught up with you and threatened to take the keys away, claiming that your clocking up hundreds of miles a day was bad for business.

Outrageous, isn't it? But that's what some ISPs are threatening to do to punters who'd signed up for unlimited, unmetered Internet access. Their crime? Staying online for 16, 20 or even – shock, horror! – 24 hours a day. Others have taken tens of thousands of advance orders, then failed to deliver the goods. These aren't the much-hyped 'good as free' services unveiled so spectacularly earlier this year, which then never went live. These are paid-for services, where a monthly or annual fee covers all calls to the Internet. Allegedly.

The ISPs (we name the guilty parties on page six) claim that a handful of 'heavy' users are slowing networks down for other subscribers. Some individuals might be doing business over their connections – a clear case of abusing their access – but others are doubtless innocent parties, victims of the ISPs' rush to market 24/7 services that, bizarrely, stand to lose money if members spend too much time online. Yet all that these heavy-handed attacks are likely to do is discourage mass uptake of these often excellent deals – and give the doom-and-gloom merchants waiting for the next dotcom failure, the next broken promise, another opportunity to gloat.

What a carry on!



Matthew Bingham, **Editor**
matthew.bingham@haynet.com

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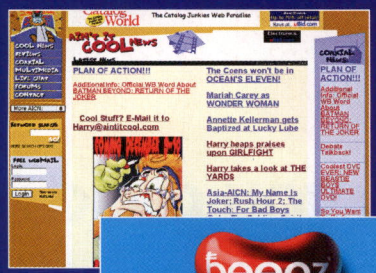

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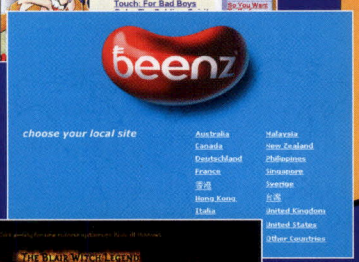

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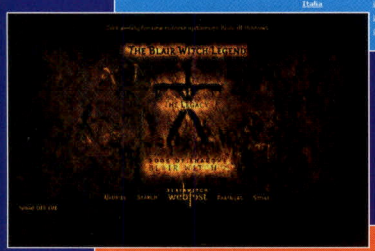

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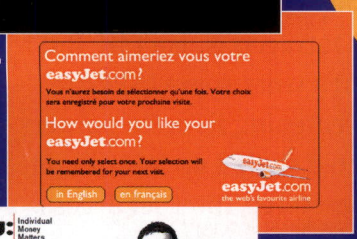

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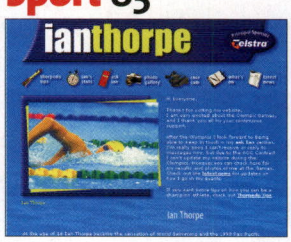

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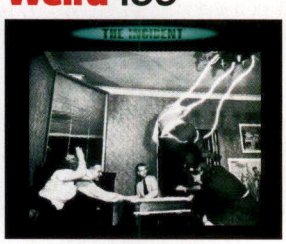

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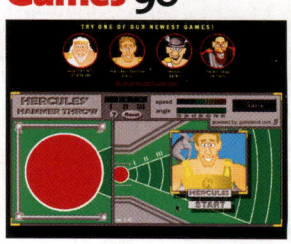

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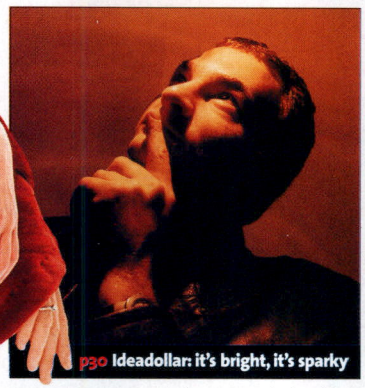

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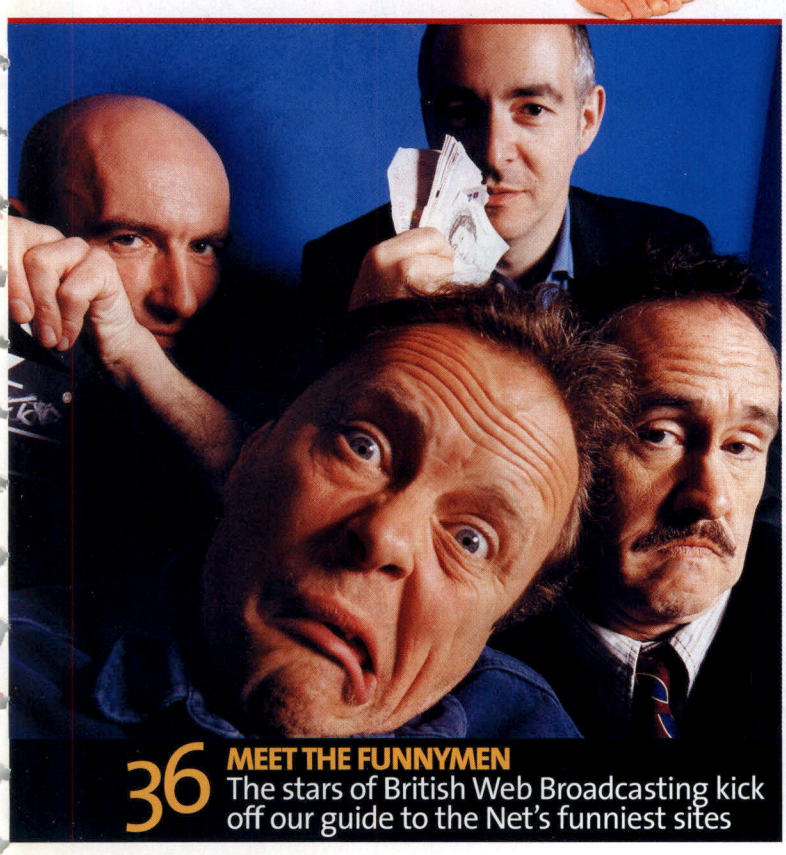

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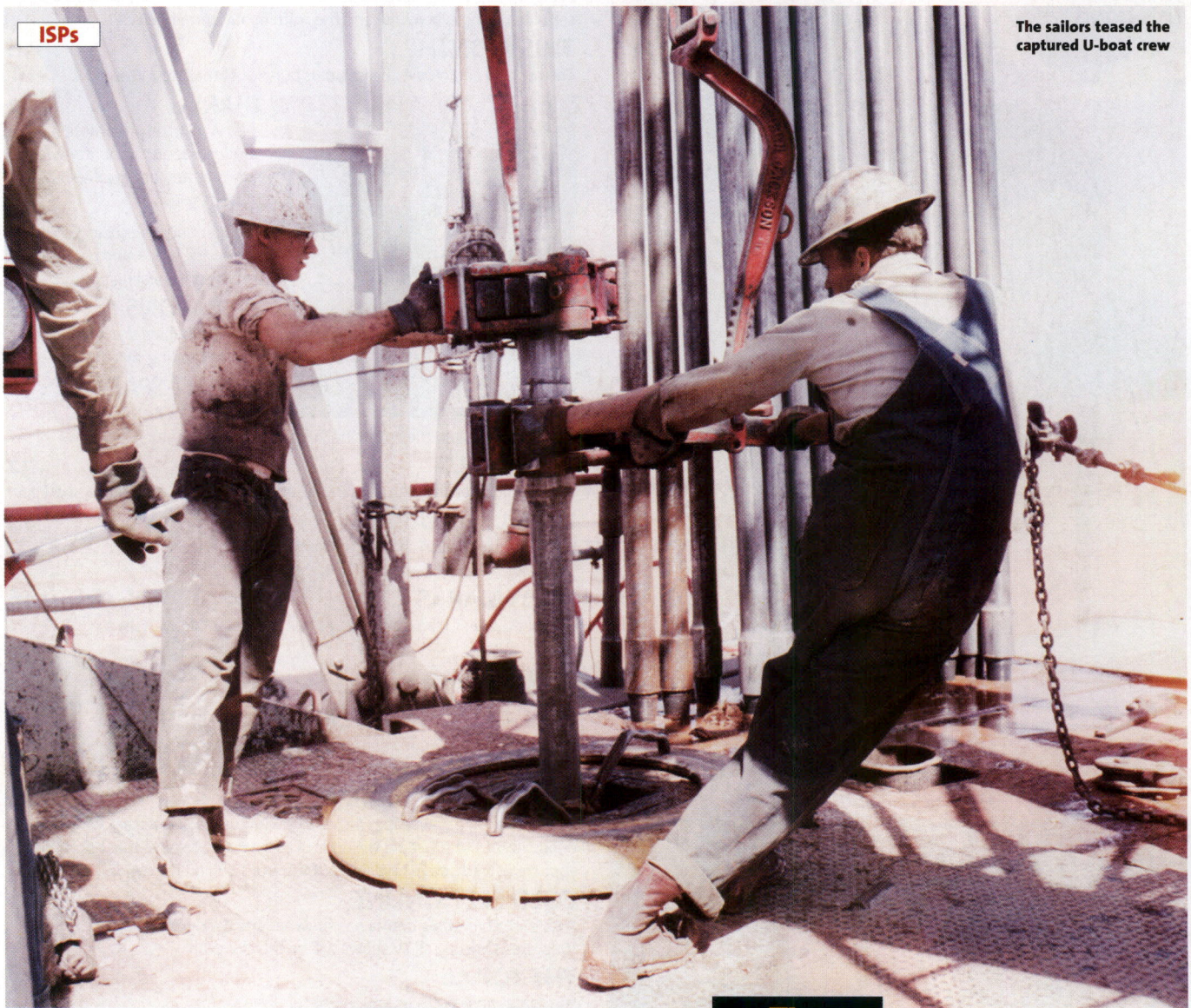


The sailors teased the captured U-boat crew

ISPs turn off the tap

Time's up for some unlucky subscribers to unmetered services

The lure of unlimited Internet access turns timid surfers into Net junkies

Seven hundred subscribers to Freeserve's 24/7 unmetered access service have been notified that Britain's biggest Internet Service Provider intends to cut off their access. Freeserve claims the 700, who are paying £10 a month for unlimited time online, are making 'abnormal demands on the network from a single connection.' It says the offenders are using their connections to stay online for up to 17 hours a day.

Freeserve's announcement came hot on the heels of decisions by three other ISPs (breathe, TFI and the Free Internet Group) to cut off subscribers who were said to be over-using unmetered access accounts for business purposes – specifically against the ISPs' terms and conditions. Another company, Connect25, has drawn fire from trading standards officials for signing up thousands of users prepared to pay £25 for a year's 24/7 unmetered access, cashing their cheques, but failing to deliver the service. As we went to press, Connect25 promised it would have gone live by the end of October.

Earlier this year, AltaVista, LineOne and Ezesurf cancelled launches of 24/7 accounts, while CallNet 0800 pulled the plug on its free service. The moves have attracted criticism, with the Consumers Association claiming the ISPs were 'more interested in increasing customer numbers than in delivering the service.'

So what's going wrong? An estimated 600,000 Britons have subscribed to unmetered access packages, but they're only a fraction of the millions of us online. The problem, for the ISPs, is that these early adopters are the people who use the Net the most – while the ISPs are gambling on far less heavy usage in order to make money. They hope the problem will resolve itself when more 'typical' surfers subscribe to 24/7 services, or the heaviest users switch to broadband accounts.

However, evidence from the US suggests the lure of unlimited, unmetered access turns even the most timid surfer into a bandwidth-hogging Net junkie – which means the ISPs will ultimately have to rethink the pricing of their 24/7 deals, or withdraw them altogether – which is bad news for everyone.

PICTURES: KOBAL, CORBIS, NEWSMAKERS

'No, that's not the one I came in with'

KNOWHOW

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT...?

No.16: Top-level domains

Is this going to make my head hurt?
Snap out of it! This is important. Top-level domain names, TLDs, are the bits that come at the end of Web addresses – stuff like .com, .net and .org. The thing is, 97% of the words in Webster's Dictionary have already been registered with a .com at the end of them. It took 10 years for the first 30 million domain names to be bought by companies; boffins reckon the next 30 million will be snapped up within 18 months. So they're going to have to invent some new endings for Web addresses.

This sounds strangely familiar...
You must be a London telephone subscriber. Just as they keep screwing with the phone codes to accommodate increased demand, so there's going to be a whole bunch of additional Web addresses coming on stream – ones like .tech, .shop, .radio, .museum, .cam, .mag...

Cool. How do I get to add my suggestion – .monkey?
Too late, I'm afraid. Applications to ICANN – the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers – closed on October 2. All you can do now is comment on the 150 or so proposed new names. You'll find them all listed at ***www.icann.com***.

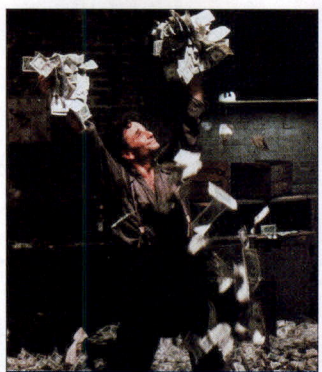
Or I could make a killing by guessing which ones will pass muster, then buying up all the best names in advance. Ha ha!
Don't think that hasn't occurred to anyone else – which is why you can't register any addresses with new TLDs until ICANN gives the nod any day now. And when that happens, expect all hell to break loose.

WEB LOTTO

WHO WANTS TO BE A BILLIONAIRE?

Online lotteries might be ten-a-penny, but it's not every day you get the chance to win $1bn. Head over to ***www.grab.com***, however, and that's exactly what could happen. There are only two drawbacks: the odds are one in 2,404,808,340, and you'll need an American or Canadian postal address to enter the draw.

We can't do anything about the first problem, but as for the second – what better time to get yourself a penpal (and a valid address for the prize money, of course)? Post a message on the International Penpals Board (***www.brieffreun.de/wwwboard/wwwboard.html***) or use Abbee's Cyber Connections service, where contacts are listed by country and age group (***www.geocities.com/SouthBeach/3176***).



Columbo could finally afford a comb

Be warned that the win is paid in instalments. There will be 20 annual payments of $5m, then 10 payments of $10m and nine of $20m. Finally, if 39 years of living the high life hasn't killed you, you'll be rewarded with a massive payment of $620m.

WAP SHOTS Screen-viewing sites for sore ears

- Get paid for using your WAP phone. Sign up with Instant Intelligence at ***www.instantintelligence.net***, tell the nice people what times of day you'd like to be contacted and they'll put you in touch with an army of market researchers, all eager to ask you questions on anything from soap operas to politics. At £1 per survey, Instant Intelligence reckon you can earn back the cost of your phone bill every month.
- If the opposite sex isn't falling at your feet at the mere sight of you gabbing away into a WAP mobile, find a partner through Picofun's new *Lifestylers* WAP-based game. Choose a character, then shape his or her personality by performing tasks and interacting with other characters in the game-space. If you get on with a fellow player, arrange to meet them in the real world. At least you'll have something to talk about. See ***www.picofun.com*** for details.
- One of the great team-ups of modern times has been that of the pub and big-screen Sunday afternoon football. Now, thanks to the miracle of WAP, you need never spend a desperate half-hour charging around a strange part of town looking for a Sky-equipped boozer. The pub-finder on the broadcaster's new WAP portal will steer you in the direction of the nearest drinker showing the footie. Go to ***www.sky.com/mobile*** for details.

News Bytes

BITS IN BRIEF

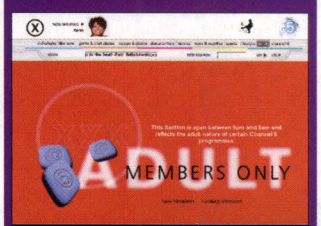
'To: cabbie@nytaxis.com. Learn to drive!'

YAHOO! WIRES NY CABS

Yahoo! is offering the lucky riders of 10 Manhattan taxis the chance to surf for free, by using a specially-installed Palm VII handheld computer as they rumble along the Big Apple's streets. Passengers can surf for news, entertainment and directions – in case the driver gets lost.

WORLD OF TELLY

Two British TV institutions – the 9pm watershed and the TV licence – are on the Net. Channel 5 has limited access to adult material on its Web site (***www.channel5.co.uk***) until 'after 9pm'. And anyone on ***www.bbc.co.uk*** should keep an eye out for detector vans – the Beeb claims UK surfers need a licence.



Channel 5: no smut before nine

TEA-LEAVES GET OWN SITE

Based in Copenhagen and serving the UK, Denmark and US, a new site allows possessors of stolen property (ie, thieves) to post their booty online, for the original owners to retrieve. TheBurglar.com (***www.theburglar.com***) claims to have 'links to the underworld'.

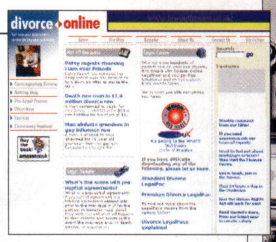
CYBERSQUATTING UPDATE

The Yanomami tribe, who live deep in the Amazon basin, are going to court to win the right to the domain name of ***www.yanomami.com***. A Florida woman thought that registering the address would be a 'good business opportunity'.

Who threw that saucer?

DIVORCE

Divorce download



Finally, you can get a quickie separation online

A 40-year-old man has become the first person in Britain to split from his wife using the Internet, saving himself time and money.

Paul Wilmott, a finance writer from Bayswater, west London, managed to cut his legal costs by 75 percent, and halved the time it took to confirm his divorce. He simply downloaded forms found on the Divorce Online Web site (***www.divorce-online.co.uk***) and returned them with his credit card details. The decree absolute came through in just six months, for a cost of £185 instead of £700.

A number of other companies are also seeking to cash in on – sorry, ease the pain of – divorce. DivorceUK (***www.divorceuk.com***) claims that more than 10,000 potential divorcées have visited the site since it went live three months ago. Donald Wright, founder of DivorceUK, commented: 'When we launched we came under fire for encouraging quickie divorces, but comments from visitors prove that the site is being used as a valuable information tool.'

Wright added that the site was primed and ready for Christmas and the New Year – traditionally an explosive time for troubled couples.

Another newcomer, ***Quick edivorce.co.uk***, has focused on the reasons people would choose a divorce on the Internet – speed and simplicity. The company claims that if your marital situation is straightforward, you could be divorced in three to four months. Another triumph for the Net!

'You want the Picasso? Then take the Picasso!'

PICTURES: KOBAL, CORBIS

'And this one's a rabbit, girls'

ELECTION

Votes for sale

What price democracy? Well, about twenty bucks actually...

Rejoicing in the delights of the free market, greedy Americans have perhaps gone a step too far to prove that theirs is, indeed, the most democratic plot of land in the ocean – with the help of Voteauction.com (***www.voteauction.com***). The site allows enfranchised citizens to sell their vote to the highest bidder.

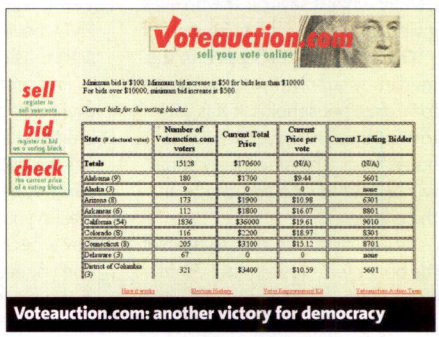
Concentrating solely – for the moment – on the (as of writing) upcoming presidential election, Voteauction.com's founder, James Baumgartner, justifies his actions by saying that he's actually doing good for US citizens. 'Right now, everyone is making money off elections – except the voters,' he explains. Of the estimated $500m that presidential hopefuls Bush and Gore will spend in the course of this election, roughly $150m will go to hot-shot 'political consultants' whose job it is to sway voters' opinions. Voteauction.com's goal is to put that cash back into the hands of the average Joe.

Indifferent Yanks can put their vote up for grabs by simply registering with Voteauction.com, and they're pooled together with fellow vote-sellers from their state. The winning bidder for each state will choose whom the group will vote for en masse, and the money is split between Voteauction.com members. California, for example, has already built up a healthy stash of $28,000, which could earn 1,422 locals about 20 bucks apiece for simply making a tick on a ballot sheet.

There's even an historical precedent: in 1757, George Washington, the 'Father of America', offered more than a quart of alcohol for each of the (presumably drunk) voters in his district.

Despite widespread criticism, no one's been able to shut down the Web site because of a US Supreme Court ruling which equates the freedom to spend money with the freedom of speech (the details, legal eagles, are at ***supct.law.cornell.edu/supct/cases/424us1.htm***).

All of which means it's unlikely that we Brits will ever get the thrill of selling our vote – a right that martyrs have fought and died for, and still denied to hundreds of millions of people around the world – for the price of a half-decent dinner.



Voteauction.com: another victory for democracy

Click this! Free Payroll for up to 10 of your people.

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OneClickHR.com

13 characters every company should employ.

TN01100

HARDWARE

Get Net access on TV – for free!

Freebox is offering PC-less homes the chance to surf from their telly. And it won't cost a penny

For several years, the Web-enabled set-top box has been threatening to replace PCs (see our feature on page 128 for some of the most recent contenders). The latest bit of hardware to try its luck in the UK comes from Freebox. The company does exactly what it says on the tin – it's giving away free set-top boxes.

Freebox hopes to break into the market by supplying Internet access to PC-free households. It has yet to announce, however, whether households that are already wired will be able to take advantage of the giveaway.

As well as connecting to the Net, the boxes will pipe digital TV into living rooms – although only free channels such as ITV2 and BBC Choice will be available until Freebox has signed a deal with pay-per-view channels. To complete the package – and perhaps to cut down on the number of black boxes connected to the TV – it will also play DVD movies and MP3 music.

Prospective box owners can sign up online with Freebox at ***www.iwantabox.com***. But if the reason you want a box is because you don't already have Internet access, you can also get one by phoning 01753 441 27. There's a refundable deposit of £10.

However, Freebox may find itself going head-to-head with the Government, which is pushing its own scheme to provide Internet access to those who don't have it. Tony Blair's promises of a wired society will come a little nearer to reality with the provision of 35,000 PCs to the poorest areas of the country. The £10m scheme includes reduced phone rates for Net access.

Howard treasured his *2001: A Space Odyssey* memorabilia

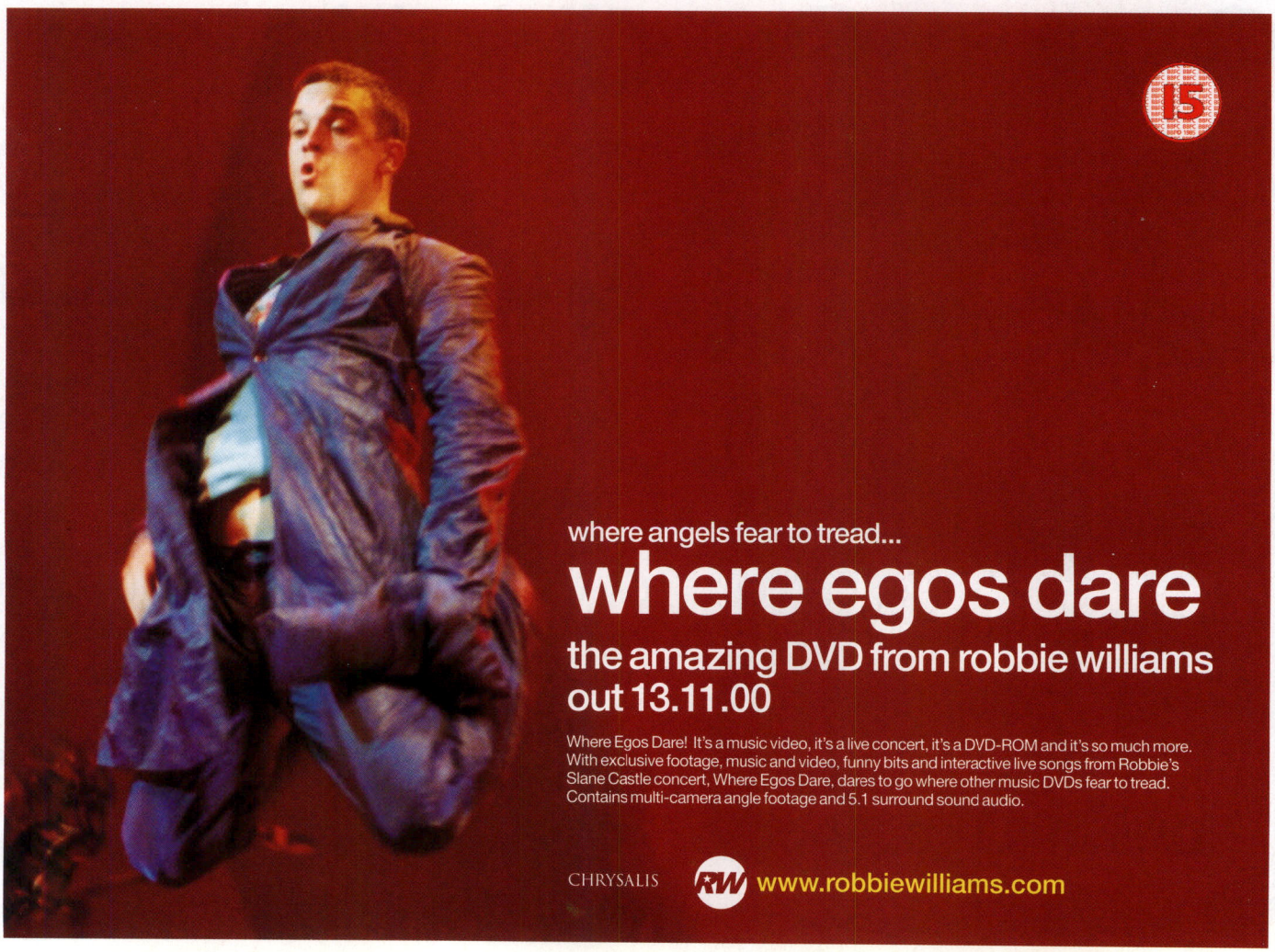
Dynamid boxes: not dumb

E-STORAGE

BOXING CLEVER

Surfing the Net at midnight, it might seem a good idea to order your weight in diamonique from ***www.qvc.co.uk***. If you work during the day, however, you won't be there to take delivery of your parcel when it arrives – and it'll go back to the depot. But a rash of smart storage boxes appearing across the south-east could solve this weak link in the e-commerce chain...

Part of a trial run by Dynamid (***www.dynamid.com***), the armoured 'bear boxes' only open upon entry of a unique security code; they contact you via email or SMS when your package has been dropped off; and – for security – they're bolted to the pavement.



CRIME ONLINE

Coppers wrestle with Web villains

Internet crime rise leaves the Old Bill baffled

Police around the world are stuck in the Dark Ages when it comes to tackling Internet crime, according to the head of Interpol, Raymond Kendall. He said that the international crimebusters hadn't expected such a rise in online fraud and terrorism, and that there was no easy solution in sight.

The problem with Internet crime is that it spans countries – and there is little police co-operation across the globe. In one recent operation, two Kazakhstanis were arrested in London for allegedly breaking into financial experts Bloomberg's computer system in Manhattan. They intended to e-blackmail the head of the company for $200,000.

In addition, the rise of cybercafés and Internet-enabled kiosks allow criminals to run virtually untraceable scams. A British company, XPO, is set to install Internet kiosks in UK airports – so a crook could hop on a plane minutes after sending an e-blackmail demand.

However, Yaman Akdeniz, founder of civil liberties group Cyber Rights (*www.cyber-rights.org*), stressed that anonymity isn't illegal, and that surfing the Net without giving your identity doesn't mean you're a criminal.

■ See also our Online Fraud special on page 44.

SPOKEN WORD

LOOK WHO'S TALKING...

Odd quotes from celebs on the Web

This month, an AOL Web chat with friend of the Krays, 'Mad' Frankie Fraser.

Why do they call you 'Mad'?
I was certified insane in prison three times and once in the army during the war.

You've spent more than half of your life banged up. Do you regret getting caught?
I have three regrets: getting caught; not robbing a bigger bank; and I wish I'd been on the Great Train Robbery.

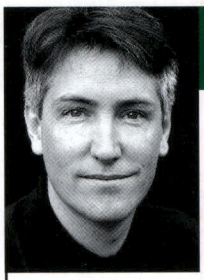
You admit to two killings, but the police claim you were responsible for 40 murders. Is that true?
If the police had said 39 or 41 I'd have really been annoyed. I hate odd numbers.

Would you release Myra Hindley from prison?
No. I would personally kill her. What she and Brady done – unforgiveable.

Your son's in jail for drug dealing. How do you feel about that?
Unfortunately my son got caught – let's hope next time he don't.

Are you still approached to carry out contract killings?
Yes, and of course I turn them all down. I haven't yet had a contract for Jack Straw. I might think twice about that one.

He's mad as a bicycle, you know



JON CASIMIR

WORLD SURFING CHAMPION

A little dishonesty could bring Napster to its knees

There's a glaringly obvious flaw in Napster and the other file-sharing networks getting bundles of media and legal attention: they're based on names. All that frenzied swapping, downloading and uploading relies on the amazingly fragile idea that what a file is *called* defines its contents.

When we share files, we're doing the equivalent of buying canned food. We can't see into the can, so we trust the label. In reality, we could be getting anything.

I downloaded Elton John's *Candle in the Wind*

For those who haven't tried them, file-sharing networks make our hard-drive file libraries open to everyone connected at that time. So, if you type in a request for the new Spice Girls track, my library will make it available to you, assuming that I have the MP3 file.

A couple of weeks ago, I downloaded a copy of Elton John's *Candle in the Wind*. Like most sane people, I would rather drink a pint of my own sweat than hear that song again, but I had my reasons for obtaining it.

After making sure it was the horrible excrescence it claimed to be, I made copies and changed the file names to the sort of things that would be attractive to music-trading geeks: Radiohead's *Knives Out* (live), The Beatles' *Strawberry Fields* demo and Eminem's *Slim Shady* (X-rated version).

Dropping these files into my music library, I connected to Napster and walked away. Four hours later, nine people had downloaded them. Gee, I hope they were all Elton fans.

I'm not likely to pull such a stunt again, because I'm actually rather fond of Napster. I only wanted to prove a point.

If I were a multinational record company, I'd stop spending money on court actions and start spending more on reliable (and legal, if not morally correct) forms of attack. Napster seems, most times of the day, to have 5,000 to 10,000 people connected. Using my crafty misnaming technique, how hard would it be for the labels to sucker thousands of those users? And if 20 percent of the files on Napster were unreliable, how long would it be before its users gave up using it?

Any network is only as good as its weakest link.

PICTURES: CHRIS RENNIE, PA

RESURRECTION

BOO: BACK FROM THE DEAD

Dotcom disaster gets a new lease of life

The ghost of Boo.com, the biggest e-commerce failure ever, is set to rise again – on the eve of Halloween. Earlier this year, the high-profile dotcom casualty was forced to auction off its assets after burning through an astonishing £85m of investment in just 18 months. The site's 350 staff were down to just 30 people helping with the liquidation, and the Department of Trade and Industry was to look into its books.

Daniella Westbrook hated camping

But at the last minute, Boo.com was bought by an American e-tailer, Fashionmall – and is now all set for a comeback on October 30.

Fashionmall's $400,000 payment only bought the trademark elements, such as the domain name and the site's cyber-assistant, Miss Boo. Its expensive back-end technology was picked up by another company.

The relaunched Boo will sell a range of 250 fashion items. Not surprisingly, the new owners say they're keen to shed the site's old image of being slow to download and not working on Macs.

Of course, Boo isn't the only dotcom failure – Web sites go to the wall every day. Recent additions to the missing-in-action list include a US teenage girl portal, Kibu.com, which lost $22m in just 46 days of operation; and CD-seller Boxman, which is seeking voluntary liquidation.

At least they gave it a go. Pop.com, an entertainment site backed by Hollywood heavyweights Steven Spielberg and Ron Howard, popped its clogs before even opening for business.

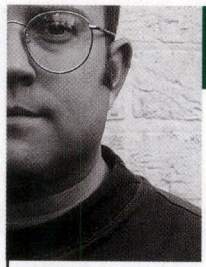
As for Boo.com's founders, they've got more cash to come. A book profiling the dotcom's demise will earn Ernst Malmsten and Kajsa Leander up to £80,000 each.

STAT ATTACK Factoids for you to repeat

Women: talkative. Even the fake ones

- A domain name is registered every three seconds.
- Ninety-three percent of surfers use PCs with MS Windows. The nearest rival is Apple: 2.84 percent of Net users own a Mac.
- A survey by *International Security* magazine found eight out of 10 US e-commerce sites had been hit by hackers.
- According to the Office of National Statistics, half the country has never used the Internet.
- A *New Woman* magazine poll discovered one in four ladies had found romance on the Web, and talked online for 102 minutes a day.
- According to financial company Goldfish, the price of online goods has fallen by 2.4 percent in the last two months.

PICTURES: BBC, KOBAL



TIM RICHARDSON
WEB WATCHER

It's good, but it's not right

Look, maybe this isn't the time or place, but there's something you have to know. I'm sorry if it's not what you wanted to hear – you may even not like it.

You see, the broadband revolution isn't all it's cracked up to be. Well, not yet. I know you're giddy with excitement at the prospect of getting your hands on ADSL. You've read up on it and you know this Billy-Whizz quick, always on, super-fast, flat-fee service is now available to us ordinary folk.

You don't care that ADSL will cost upwards of £400 a year to run. The fact that only a minority of people can get it at the moment simply makes it even more appealing. What's more, you're not bothered one jot that ADSL stands for Asynchronous Digital Subscriber Line and sounds as appetising as fish-heads stewed in cold coffee. To you, they are simply the finest four words in the world. Every time you hear 'ADSL' you close your eyes and dream of hopping from Web site to Web site in an instant, streaming video whenever you want it...

Conditions on the Harry Potter film set were harsh

The broadband revolution isn't all it's cracked up to be

Except there's growing disquiet among those who've signed up. An increasing number are claiming the whole installation process is one big nightmare. Having been given the go-ahead from BT they've experienced cancelled appointments, lost orders, and a general feeling of chaos that has taken away the excitement at getting this new technology.

Of course, much of this is teething troubles; no one can expect something as new as ADSL to be right first time.

Which is exactly my point. If you want to avoid being a guinea pig in this Net experiment, stay clear of ADSL. Let someone else take the risk. In a year or two the problems should have been ironed out and, who knows, it may even be cheaper. But until then, take up knitting or something.

"I'd really like to see you again.
Meet me at the.....
"....where?
you still there?
....hello"
fastbeat.com makes Pay as You Go as easy as a contract phone.
Especially when you really need it.
Enter your details just once so you can quickly top up any member of your family irrespective of the mix of networks, without the inconvenience of going to the shops.
You can also top up by sending us a simple text message.
So if you are out for the day and want to buy airtime for another member of your family, even if they are on a different network to you, simply SMS us your fastbeat password and we will immediately text them their top up.
To manage your spending our secure site enables you to monitor your entire family's fastbeat top ups.
register in 90 seconds at: www.fastbeat.com
the fast way to top up your talktime
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THE BEST, THE WORST AND THE DAFTEST STUFF ON THE WEB

HEROES & ZEROS

BEST GAME

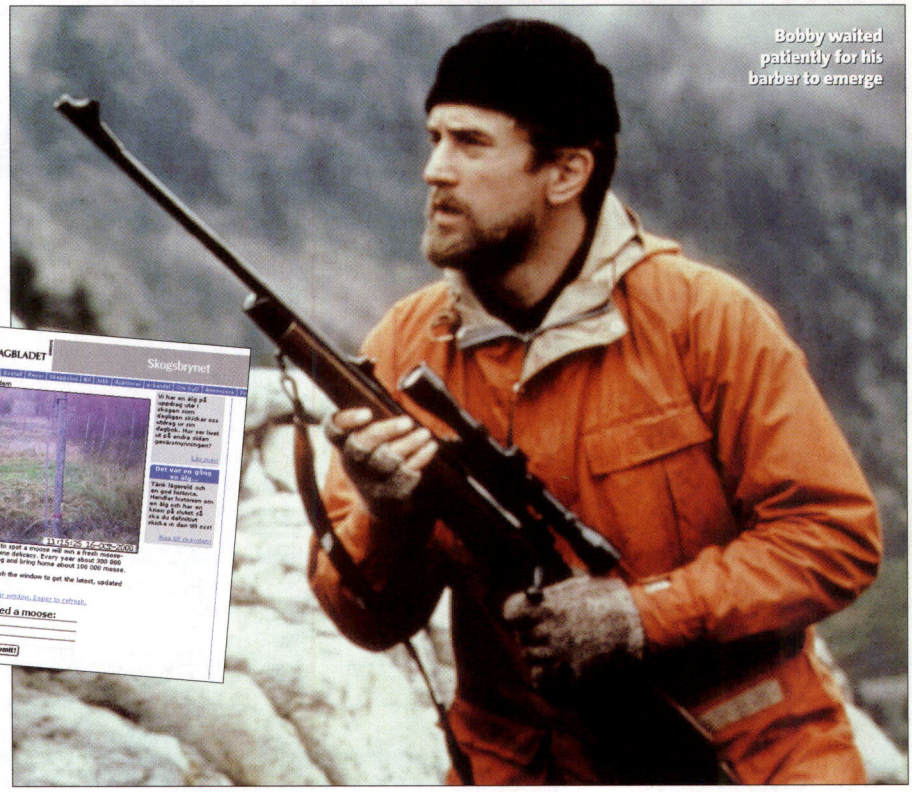
THE DEER HUNTERS

It's easy to enjoy armchair sports if you're a football fan but, until now, hunters have had to brave the woods to get their fix. That's all changed, however, thanks to Swedish newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet*, which has set up a forest Web-cam to catch wandering elk as they mooch past.

The camera, at ***www.svd.se/alg***, updates every minute, and anyone who spots one of the beasts has to fill in a form on the site, noting the time and date. Those successful spotters who have their 'kills' confirmed win a nice, juicy elk steak.

The Swedish newspaper is actually doing its bit for conservation, as there are 30 elk for every person in the country and culling them is necessary to keep down the numbers.

Of course, there's also something in it for *Svenska Dagbladet*. Would-be hunters have to keep refreshing the page to get the latest grab from the Webcam. According to the Reuters news agency, this has increased the newspaper site's hits by 20 per cent.



Bobby waited patiently for his barber to emerge

The Nuclear Blast Mapper: sayonara, headteacher!

BEST REVENGE

IT'S A BLAST

If a thermonuclear bomb exploded next to your house, you'd have as much chance of survival as an England football manager. But if the blast was five, 10 or even a mere 20 miles away, the odds start to look a little better. The Nuclear Blast Mapper allows you to drop an H-bomb anywhere in the world, then see how the blast radius and radioactive fallout would affect the surrounding area. Choose from one to 25 megatons, then deposit it right on the roof of your old junior school. Sheer bliss.

www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/bomb/sfeature/blastmap.html

Its good to have a hobby

BIGGEST NUTTER

THE HIT MAN

Unless you're David Banner, most people can get a little angry without the effects being too destructive. But that's not the case with Roy, who in his own words was 'born to destroy'. Dressed as a zulu warrior and wielding a pair of nunchuks, his site exclaims: 'This is Roy. I search and I destroy! I love to hit stuff. I can hit anything. Give it to me and I bust it!' Proof enough of his talent is in the 'before' and 'after' shots of items destroyed, including a Spanish guitar and a Japanese boombox. A movie on the site also shows Roy laying into a pint of beer and a loaf of bread with a sledgehammer, but even your average wimp could handle that. ***www.borntodestroy.com***

FUNNIEST ROW Dotcom disappointment

ATTACHMENTS, THE BBC'S ATTEMPT to make a new *This Life*, is set in an Internet company, where coding and crashes are to be found alongside sex, drugs and dodgy relationships. The imaginary company has its own Web site at ***www.seethru.co.uk***, but the real interest is in a rival site set up by angry nerds: ***www.everyonehatesattachments.com***. It seems the writers haven't done as much homework as they thought – and geekdom certainly isn't taking these shortcomings lightly. Comments range from picking holes in the technical aspects of the company to denigrating the whole show. 'It's about as reflective of new media as *Press Gang* is of a broadsheet newspaper,' says one viewer.

Seethru.co.uk: it's not real, you know

PICTURE: KOBAL

WEBSITES

C'mon, feel the noize!

Serious musicphiles can feed their passions on the World Wide Web

When it comes to music on the Web, it's invariably sites like Napster which grab the headlines. But there's more to Net sounds than 14-year-olds ripping off Metallica tracks – as a bunch of new sites prove. Axemen will be in heaven at ***www.guitargeek.com***, where they'll find thousands of top guitarists' stage and studio set-ups. Did you know that the Foo Fighters' Dave Grohl, for example, feeds his Gibson SG through a Jester Enterprises Hydra Tube Splitter to a Vox AC-30 combo amp? Thought not...

Having set your gear up in the living room, you'll want something to play. For a couple of quid a time you can download your choice of hundreds of music scores from ***www.sheetmusicdirect.com*** – anything from Aqua to Bix Beiderbecke. And 'real' music fans needn't feel they're missing out on the Internet music revolution – Karadar's Classical Music World (***www.karadar.it***) has assembled 300 free, legal MP3 files of the classics. Most popular download is Beethoven's *For Elise*.

***guitargeek.com*: Fender heaven**

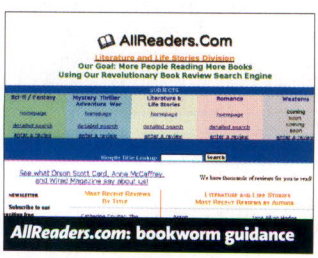
***sheetmusicdirect.com*: ample scores**

***www.karadar.it*: download a classic**

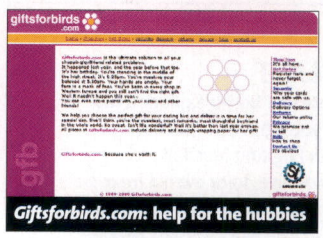
The best of the rest

ELSEWHERE on the Web, Multimap (***www.multimap.com***) has added an irresistible 'aerial photo' option to it's long-established street-finder service. With most major British cities covered, you can look up your address then zoom in, God-like, to see whether Multimap's photographers snapped you sunbathing in the back garden last summer.

Another great idea is the literary search engine at Allreaders.com (***www.allreaders.com***). You can hunt for the type of novel you want to read by filling in a questionnaire of up to 2000 different elements of plot, character, setting and theme. The engine finds the nearest matches, complete with reviews and lists of similar works. Some 10,000 titles are already in the database, with more being added. All it needs now is a link to an online bookseller.



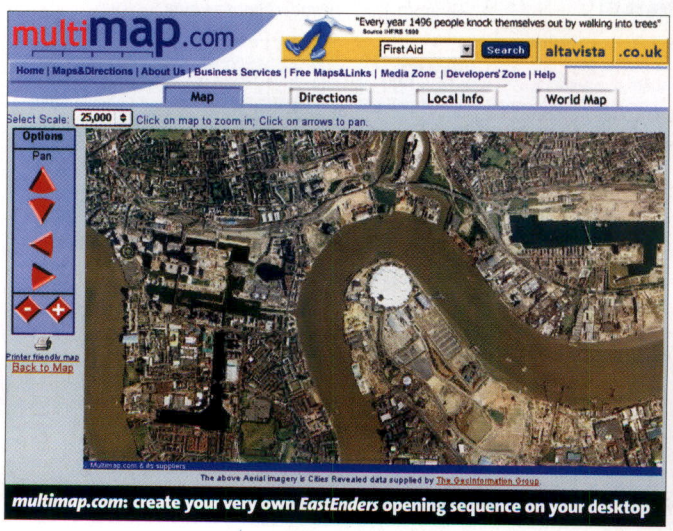
***AllReaders.com*: bookworm guidance**



***Giftsforbirds.com*: help for the hubbies**

Buying a present for the girlfriend is every man's nightmare, and with Christmas coming up, a million hopeless blokes will soon be seen wandering round John Lewis, knowing they're just one naff gift away from a life of celibacy. Thank the Lord, then, for Gifts for Birds (***www.giftsforbirds.com***): log on, enter what you think she's worth and this site will spit out dozens of gift ideas, and even wrap them up with ribbons and stuff.

Men, of course, are far simpler. So simple, in fact, that you ladies won't have to spend a thing to bring a smile to their faces. Just point the man in your life in the direction of ***www.magicsponge.com*** – yet anot her football Web site, but with a customisable home page. Tell it what team you support and it'll remake itself in the correct colours, then stream in all the latest relevant news and reports. Paradise!



***multimap.com*: create your very own *EastEnders* opening sequence on your desktop**

FANS' FAVES FOR ENGLAND MANAGER
1 Terry Venables
2 Peter Taylor
3 Sir Alex Ferguson
4 Arsene Wenger
5 Marcello Lippi
www.sportinglife.com

TOP FIVE DESTINATIONS BOOKED ONLINE
1 Belfast
2 Jersey
3 Amsterdam
4 Dublin
5 London
www.cheapflights.com

ONLINE BEST-SELLERS
1 *How to Eat* Nigella Lawson
2 *The Beatles Anthology* The Beatles
3 *The Return of the Naked Chef* Jamie Oliver
4 *How To Be a Domestic Goddess* Nigella Lawson
5 *Big Brother: The Unseen Story* Jean Ritchie
www.amazon.co.uk

TOP SITES FOR FREE STUFF
1 www.cybergold.com
2 www.startsampling.com
3 www.webcelerator.com
4 fs2.freeshop.com
5 www.myfree.com
www.topg.com

MOST SEARCHED TERMS
1 MP3
2 Sex
3 Hotmail
4 Yahoo
5 Warez
6 Pokemon
7 N64 Roms
8 Chat
9 Pamela Anderson
10 Playboy
www.search words.com

Babe watch Pamela Anderson

WEBSITE WORDS: MATTHEW BINGHAM; PICTURES: PA, RETNA

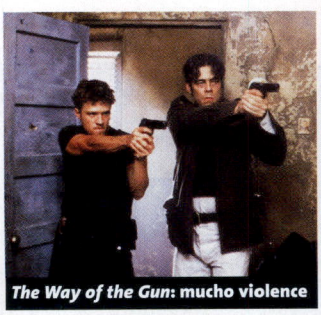
One Grinch, three Devils

Danny Graydon suffers from Satanic overload

Lost Souls
Winona Ryder, Ben Chaplin ★★
If the Devil exists, he'll be suing Hollywood for mistreatment. *Lost Souls* is another lame Apocalypse flick, weighed down by self-importance. Chaplin is earmarked to become Old Nick's earthly vessel when he turns 30, and must be convinced of his fate by Ryder. Fine visuals and a cameo by William Hurt are the film's only good points.
www.lostsoulsmovie.com *Spooky site with helpful 'Symbols of Evil' section.*

The Kid
Bruce Willis, Emily Mortimer
★★★★
After saving a kid's soul in *The Sixth Sense*, it's Bruce Willis' turn to be rescued. He plays an image consultant whose own image is one angry mess. Cue a visit from himself aged eight, who helps him deal with his anger. Despite the Disney tag, this is mawk-free, with Willis in fine form.
www.disney.co.uk/DisneyMovies/the_kid *Just a trailer and synopsis.*

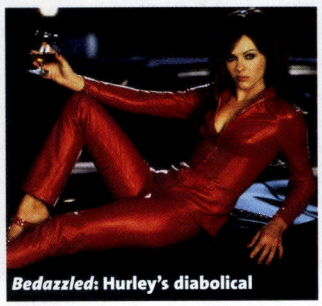
The Yards
Mark Wahlberg, Charlize Theron
★★★
A dark, tragic crime drama; Mark

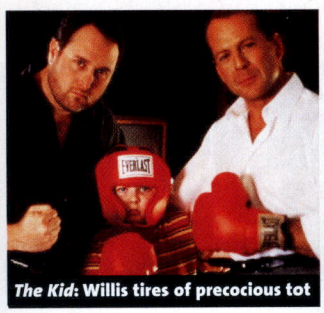

***The Way of the Gun*: mucho violence**

Wahlberg is excellent as the ex-con drawn away from the straight and narrow. The depressing subject matter and predictable moments are salvaged by a set of excellent performances, in which the likes of Wahlberg and Joaquin Phoenix hold their own against heavyweights James Caan and Faye Dunaway.
www.theyardsmovie.com *Trailer and synopsis.*

Little Nicky
Adam Sandler, Patricia Arquette ★
More diabolical goings-on. Little Nicky is shy, awkward and bullied. He's also the son of the Devil. When his brothers upset the balance of good and evil, Nicky must go to New York and stop them, or Dad croaks. Sandler's annoying, Tarantino has a woeful cameo and the whole thing is utterly deserving of damnation.
www.littlenicky.com *Film info, contest and lightweight Flash game.*

The Watcher
Keanu Reeves, James Spader ★★★
By no means bad, *The Watcher*'s shortcomings are not Keanu-related. As the killer whose existence revolves around staging elaborate scenarios for an FBI man, Reeves is fine, but is relegated to a mere plot device. Any juicy interplay with Spader's tragic cop is lost in a clutter of formulaic chase sequences. Too familiar, under-plotted and surrounded by shaky psychology, this


***Bedazzled*: Hurley's diabolical**

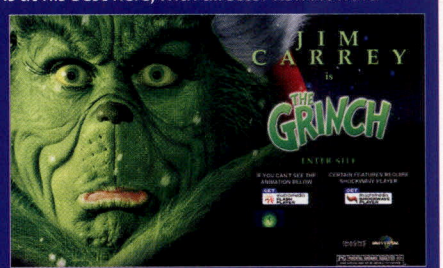

***The Kid*: Willis tires of precocious tot**

makes for undemanding viewing.
www.thewatchermovie.com *Loaded with downloadable goodies.*

Bedazzled
Brendan Fraser, Elizabeth Hurley
★★★
Updating the Peter Cook/Dudley Moore classic, this tale of a loser who's granted seven wishes by – you guessed it – the Devil (a bikini-clad Hurley) sees Fraser on good, wacky form. Hurley is formidable eye-candy, but lacks the comedy chops to give good Satan. Still, Fraser as a drug lord makes it all worthwhile.
www.bedazzledmovie.com *Full site to come soon; just a trailer for now.*

MOVIE OF THE MONTH

How The Grinch Stole Christmas
Jim Carrey, Jeffrey Tambor ★★★★★
thenet ★★★★★ AWARD
An ambitious and stunning realisation of the classic Dr Seuss cartoon. An unrecognisable Jim Carrey is both wonderful and hilarious as the comical meanie with a heart three sizes too small, who conspires to rid Whoville of its favourite time of the year. Yes, there's the obligatory schmaltz, but you'll undoubtedly be taken aback by the vividly beautiful sets, the tremendous cast and Anthony Hopkins' perfect narration. Carrey is at his best here, with director Ron Howard simply – and wisely – letting him run wild. A must for kids and nostalgic adults alike, this is a top-notch, no-holds-barred Hollywood affair.
www.grinched.com *Superb Flash site that promises much to come.*



***Charlie's Angels*: reunited**

Charlie's Angels
Drew Barrymore, Cameron Diaz, Lucy Liu ★★★★
Wisely playing up the enormous cheese factor of the TV show, *Charlie's Angels* is an enjoyable blend of over-the-top action and double entendres, lampooning the series with a stylish nod and a wink. Of course, the story is nonsense, but the cocktail of three gorgeous women, an on-form Bill Murray (as Bosley) and ridiculously entertaining stunts renders such concerns worthless.
www.spe.sony.com/movies/charliesangels *Stunning site with a horde of funky elements.*

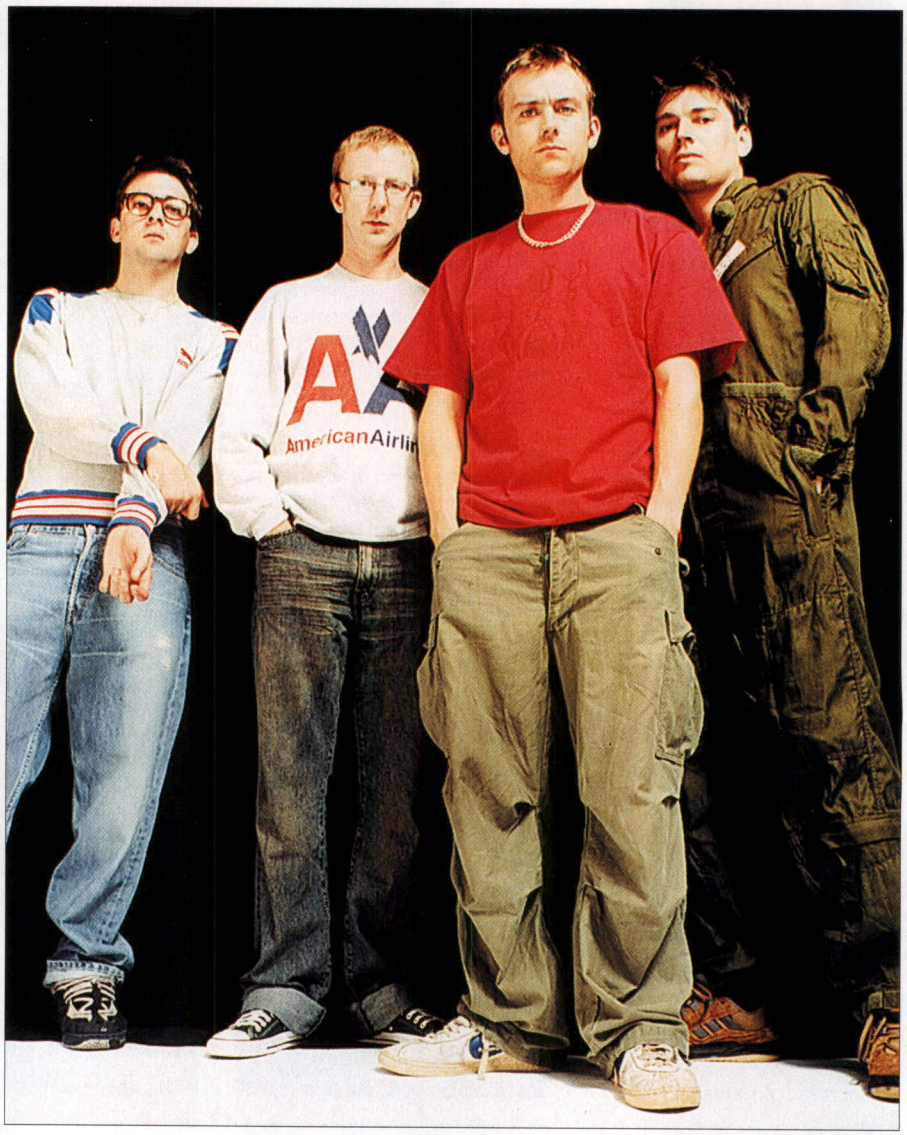
The Way of the Gun
Ryan Phillipe, Benicio Del Toro
★★★
The directorial debut of *The Usual Suspects* writer Christopher McQuarrie, this features the kind of excessive gun-play that gives John Woo a warm, tingly feeling. Phillipe and Del Toro are a pair of down-on-their-luck gunmen who plot to kidnap a surrogate mum. Gleefully 'borrowing' crime drama riffs, some scenes are often too violent.
www.wayofthegun.com *Very slick, but ultimately very empty.*

Pitch Black
Vin Diesel, Cole Hauser ★★★★
In this thrilling mix of *Starship Troopers* and *Aliens*, a group of humans crash-land on a distant planet where they have to confront a legion of darkness-thriving monsters. Worse, the vicious prisoner they were escorting is their only chance of survival. The 'us vs them' theme is all too familiar, but who could complain with so many jump-out-of-your-seat moments?
www.pitch-black.com

MUSIC ALBUM OF THE MONTH

They made it through

Sam Upton salutes the survival of Britain's prodigal sons: Blur



Blur

The Best Of **FOOD** ★★★★★

Oasis may have made more money and had more column inches, but throughout their five-year tussle with Blur the troubled Gallaghers have undoubtedly come off worse. One listen to the new Blur single, ***Music Is My Radar***, and it's apparent that not only are the one-time Mockneys still making top music, they've gone off in yet another direction. And here you can chart those directions in one package. From the baggy splendour of *There's No Other Way* to the kraut experimentalism of *Beetlebum*, the quality quotient is consistently high. A perfect encapsulation of how the Britpop war was won.

www.blur-radio.com *Coinciding with the release of* The Best Of, *Blur have set up their own Internet radio station, with a documentary, gig recordings and Alex James' sideways look at the band's career.*

MUSIC NEW RELEASES

Marilyn Manson

Holy Wood (In The Valley Of The Shadow Of Death)

INERSCOPE ★★★

'The two years since my last album,' says the bane of America's moral majority, 'have been filled with God and rappers. It's time for death and Satan to be put in the forefront.' Suffice to say it's grim stuff. 'I wanted to beat myself to death after listening to the entire record,' Marilyn recalls. Take that as a recommendation.

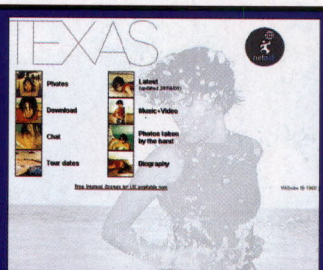
www.marilynmanson.net *This official site contains all the requisite doom and morbidity chic.*

Fatboy Slim

Halfway Between The Gutter And The Stars **SKINT** ★★★★

Norman has said of this that he's in a no-lose situation: if it sells millions he'll be laughing all the way to the private island; if it stiffs, he'll get his life back. But the world's most famous DJ shouldn't worry, as *Halfway...* more than meets all expectations. From *Bird Of Prey* to the Macy Gray collaboration *Love Life*, Norm has discovered the joys of luscious sampling and subtle breakbeat stylings. If this is what marriage does, bring on the vicar.

www.gutterandstars.com *Superslick album site, with samples and photos.*



Texas

Greatest Hits **MERCURY** ★★★

Considering early incarnations of Texas included such 80s horrors as Altered Images, it's a wonder they sold any records at all – never mind becoming one of the biggest bands in the world. But as this compilation attests, they have their moments. *I Don't Want A Lover* may be Chris Evans-endorsed heartless swill, but Sharleen Spiteri's undeniable presence raises the band to the level of the pleasantly diverting – a bland description for a bland band.

www.texas.uk.com *The saucy snaps of Sharleen make a visit worthwhile.*

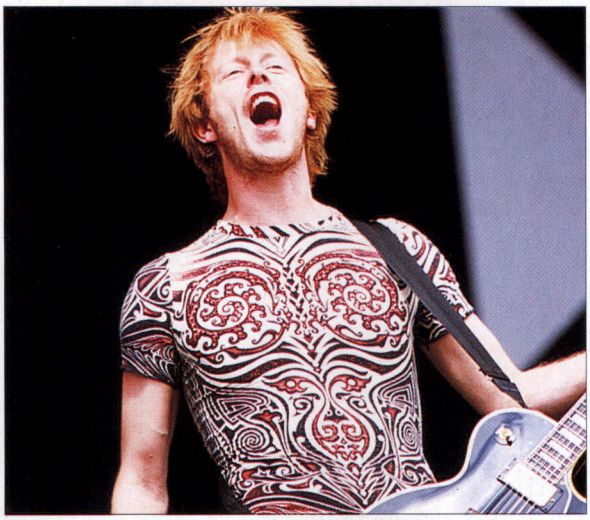
Erasure

Loveboat **MUTE** ★★★

Now into their ninth album and 15th year, Andy and Vince have made a comeback. But unlike the Erasure of 10 years ago, *Loveboat* displays little campness – instead there are slow, acoustic strolls with a moodiness that doesn't sit easily with Bell's Liberace-like flouncings. Tracks like *Love Is The Rage* might briefly press the right buttons, but the earth remains unmoved.

www.erasure.org *Not the greatest looking site, but loads of detail.*

TOPLOADER WORDS: DAVID HURST; PICTURES: RETNA, PEROU, ANGELA LUBRANO



TOPLOADER TALK

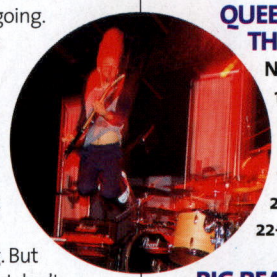
Three Top 20 singles, a gold album, tours with Paul Weller, Noel Gallagher, Travis, Stereophonics and Bon Jovi at Wembley... life's on the up for Toploader. We spoke to lead guitarist Julian Deane

What's it like being a rock 'n' roll star, then?
It's weird. Before February no-one really knew who we were, but since then we've been so busy we've been in a bubble and are not sure what's going on. At the end of gigs what we've always done is go to the bar and have a drink – now it's changed significantly. We went to the bar last night and were literally swamped.

Are you wired yet?
I bought a laptop last week, and I've been using email for a year. The band try to log onto our Web site (***www.toploader.com***) and say things, but I'm not sure what we're supposed to say. I take the laptop when we're touring as there are so many hours to kill. I'm finding it very addictive. After the gig last night I thought, 'I'll go online for a bit'. I ended up getting to bed at 8am.

Did you design the fine Toploader site?
We can't take credit for our Web site, but we do give them ideas from time to time.

What sites have you found that you like?
I quite like Music 365 (***www.music365.com***). I look at other band sites, too. I logged on to Radiohead's site the other day (***www.radiohead.co.uk***) and it confused me. There were just abstract things. I think music online is without a doubt the way the business is going. The band's divided about it: Joe the singer thinks it's terrible that people get music for free. For me, if people download our music for free, they might then pay to see a gig. But at the end of the day I don't want to work for nothing!



Toploader's new single, Dancing In The Moonlight, *is released on November 13*

GIG GUIDE

Who's doing what where...

AC/DC
Nov 28 Birmingham NEC **30** Sheffield Arena **Dec 1** Manchester Arena **2** Glasgow SECC **4-5** London Wembley Arena

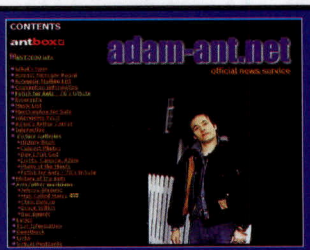
MOBY
Nov 12-13 Manchester Apollo

QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE
Nov 14 Belfast Limelight **16** Glasgow Barrowlands **17** Manchester Academy **18** Sheffield Leadmill **19** Nottingham Rock City **21** Wolverhampton Civic Hall **22-23** London Astoria

BIG BEAT BOUTIQUE
Nov 7 Aberdeen Lemon Tree **8** Newcastle Uni **9** Norwich Waterfront **10** Brighton Concorde 2 **12** Leeds Cockpit **13** Cambridge Junction **14** Portsmouth Wedgewood **15** London Astoria

JAMES
Nov 7 Notts Rock City **8** Brixton Academy

REEF
Nov 6 Leeds Metropolitan University **7** Derby Assembly Rooms **8** Cambridge Corn Exchange **10** London Astoria **11** Southampton Guildhall **12** Cardiff University **13** Exeter University



Adam Ant

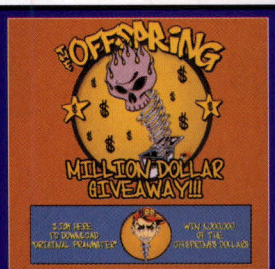
Antbox **SONY** ★★★★

As the 80s revival continues apace, with shoulder pads, gold belts and even BT ads harking back, it should come as no surprise to discover one of the decade's most recognisable names releasing an exhaustive trawl through his back catalogue. With three CDs-worth of greatest hits, b-sides and un-released rareties plus a 48-page booklet, this is clearly an item to be treasured. King of the wild frontier? Damn straight.

www.adam-ant.net *Everything the Antophile could ever wish for: news, reviews, competitions, photos...*

Offspring

Conspiracy Of One **COLUMBIA** ★★★★



This Orange County band have been around for nearly a decade now, thrashing out jovial semi-political hardcore. And they're not about to stop now. Their seventh studio album makes no apologies for being an all-out punker party, with singer Dexter Holland screaming with the power of four men and looking forward to a few more platinum discs.

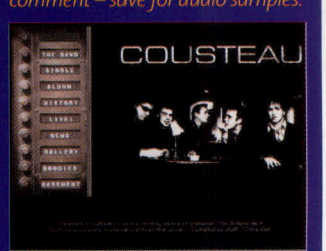
www.offspring.com *Displaying all the usual news, downloads and exhaustive band info, the band's official site also features a competition to win a million dollars. You don't get that with Shed Seven.*

Cousteau

Cousteau **PALM PICTURES** ★★★★

Taking its cue from such gloomy geniuses as Scott Walker and Nick Drake, this debut album exhibits the smoothest sounds of the year, oozing pure emotion and soul. The fact that honey-throated singer Liam McKahey looks like an iron-pumping navvy only adds to the intrigue, making this one of the finest records you'll hear all year.

www.cousteau.co.uk *In keeping with the band's understated chic, their site is a sparse and dark affair with minimal writing and comment – save for audio samples.*



web sight

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Available at Buy.com, selected Currys and Dixons stores, PC World, Staples, Simply Computers, computer retailers on Tottenham Court Road, Tempo and many independent computer retailers. For further information, call 0208-308 6582.

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GAMES

They shoot, they score!

Football games, basketball games and, er, horseriding

Tekken Tag Tournament *(PS2)*

★★★★

Okay, you've got your PlayStation2 and an excellent football game – what next? A fighting game, of course; and what better series to start the new console off with than *Tekken*? This excellent franchise just got better, with the latest version boasting 20 characters from previous games to complement 10 new ones. And the one-button/one-limb control method is first rate. Fingers at the ready, special movies learnt... let's get ready to rumble!

www.tekkentagtournament.com

Character information and fan forums bring to life an otherwise bland Web site.

FIFA 2001 *(PC, PSX, PS2)*

★★★★★

The most famous football franchise in the world keeps on keeping on. But enough about Manchester United – we're talking about great games, and you can't do that without mentioning the *FIFA* series, which is back with its 2001 incarnation on the PC and various PlayStations. Featuring the talents of Paul Scholes and Thierry Henry, it looks better than ever, and gameplay is returning to former glories after a few dodgy editions that let Konami slip in behind the defence with its *ISS* titles.

fifa2001.ea.com

Great site with movies, FAQs, loads of screenshots and the whole story behind the creation of this latest instalment – if you're interested.

NBA Live 2001 *(PC, PSX, PS2)*

★★★★

With the NBA season just tipping off in the States, the small army of basketball fans in the UK will be itching to get their mitts on the latest instalment in the *NBA Live* series. This franchise has managed to stake a claim as *the* b-ball game of choice on the PlayStation and PC; and it just keeps on getting better, with the motion-captured jamming skills of All-Star Kevin Garnett.

www.nba-live.com

Not much here on 2001, but expect plenty of hints, tips patches and dazzling screenshots if the pages for the older titles are anything to go by.

Cultures *(PC)*

★★★★

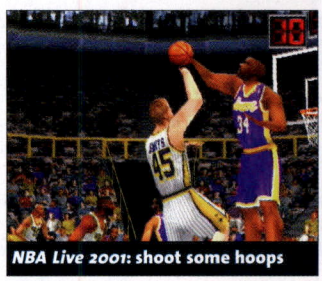
If you like the idea of a game that's a cross between *The Sims* and *Age Of Empires*, congratulations, you've just found it! *Cultures* mixes elements of both titles and blends them into a fun and extremely addictive whole. In your role as a virtual God, you have to look after the interests of small groups of Greenland exiles in the New World, making sure that not only do they have somewhere to sleep and enough food, but also that they have friends to talk to. Great graphics and addictive gameplay win the day.

www.thq.co.uk

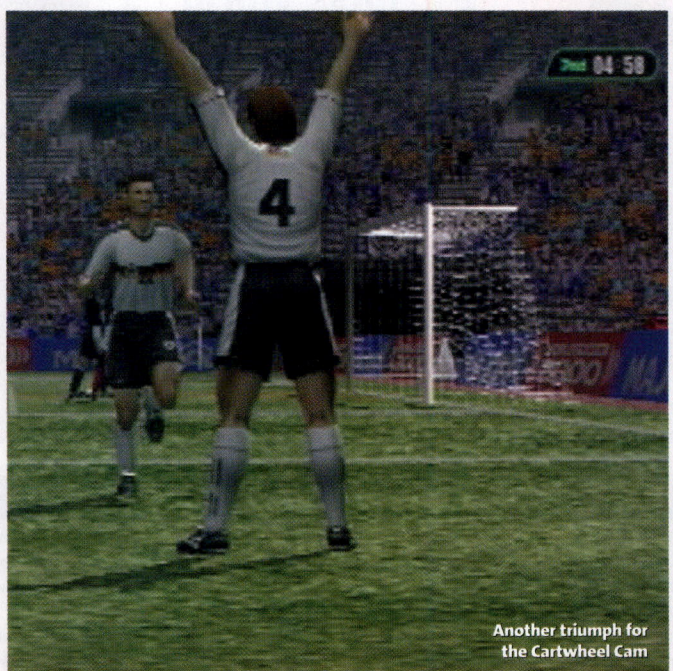
This site gives you lots of info on game designers THQ, but only just enough on Cultures itself.

Tekken Tag Tournament: let's rumble!

Equestriad 2001: dressage action



NBA Live 2001: shoot some hoops



Another triumph for the Cartwheel Cam

GAME OF THE MONTH

International Superstar Soccer (PS2)

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD ★★★★★

No console launch would be complete without a seriously kick-arse footie game, and the PlayStation2 has found the back of the net with a brace of fine titles. There's *FIFA 2001*, of course, but we think this little beauty from Konami is far more impressive. Not only does *ISS* benefit from its first official licence (real names at last, no more 'Michael Oren' up front for England), but it's also pulled out all the stops with Premier League-level gameplay and features.

www.konami-europe.com *Very little PS2 activity going on here, but we're sure things will hot up soon. Honestly.*

Black & White *(PC)*

★★★★★

Over the past year, *Black & White* has redefined the phrase 'eagerly awaited'. The title has suffered numerous delays and release date changes (ie, it's been put back), but hasn't disappointed now that it's finally made it. Designed by gaming guru Peter Molyneux, *Black & White* puts you in a position of ultimate control, with the option of divine intervention at your fingertips. You're Good or Evil – there is no inbetween – in this large, inventive and stunningly attractive role-playing game.

www.lionhead.co.uk

Great Shockwave site with everything you need to know about this visually breathtaking game.

Quake 3 Arena: Dreamcast debut

Quake 3 Arena *(DC)*

★★★★★

The Dreamcast is finally getting some quality first-person shoot-'em-ups. Not only is this conversion of *Quake 3 Arena* making an appearance, but so is the competition, with *Unreal Tournament* and *Half Life* getting in on the action. With Sega's online gaming service finally underway, this great multi-player title is guaranteed big sales, and could well help in Sega's battle against the newly-released PS2. Big guns, lots of shooting and fast-paced action – bring it on!

www.dreamcast-europe.com

The official Sega site is flawless: well-designed, smooth to use and plenty of information on all the titles.

Equestriad 2001 *(PC, PS)*

★★★

A horseriding game?! That's what we thought – until we played this game and it failed to fall at the first hurdle. It's actually very addictive, and apart from the dressage section – which we still don't understand – it's good fun. The graphics are pretty cool, too, although staring out between the ears of a horse rather then through the sights of a rail gun takes a little getting used to.

www.midasinteractive.com

An impressive corporate site is let down by having only the bare bones of information on some titles.

WORDS: SHAUN MARIN

2 SAT LE JOG 2000

Land's End to John O'Groats, December 2

LE JOG isn't a running event around Paris, but an acronym for one of the toughest car rallies in the world. The cars that take part are all at least 25 years old and the 125 crews have to pit their skills against 1,650 miles of challenging roads. As if that wasn't enough, there are also special tests to complete through some of Britain's most rugged terrain, in the depths of winter. It's not a race, though, and there is no outright winner – it's all about reliability, regularity and accurate time-keeping. Proof of its tough reputation comes from the fact that, over the last three years, only four crews have won the coveted gold medals. ***www.hero.org.uk/lejog***

30 THUR Miss World

Miss World, November 30

Jerry Springer will be watching his guests reveal a lot about themselves once again, but this time during the swimsuit round of the Miss World pageant. The chat-show star hosts the 50th anniversary of the event, which takes place at the Millennium Dome in London. Last year's Miss World, Yukta Mookhey of India, will crown this year's winner, but don't hold your breath – the UK hasn't won it since back in 1983 when Sarah-Jane Hutt strutted her stuff. ***www.maxpages.com/beautypageants***

NOVEMBER 8 – DECEMBER 7

NOV 8 WEDNESDAY Fish and Chip Shop of the Year awards ***www.seafish.co.uk/fanclub***
Magic of the Movies concert ***www.starwars.com***

9 THUR 2nd London International Tango Festival ***www.planet-tango.com***
Lou Ferrigno, 49 ***www.incrediblehulk.com***

10 FRI Crime Writer's Association awards ***www.fansites.com/mickey_spillane.html***
Welsh Film Festival ***www.iffw.co.uk***

11 SAT Lord Mayor's Show ***www.corpoflondon.gov.uk/lordmayor/LMShow.htm***
Stockholm International Film Festival ***cityguide.se/stockholm***

12 SUN Remembrance Sunday ***www.aboutbritain.com/TheCenotaph.htm***
First meteor shower on record in 1799 ***www.deepimpact.com***

18 SAT 80s songstress Kim Wilde, 40 ***users2.50megs.com/kwportal***
William Tell shoots apple off his son's head in 1307 ***www.archery.org***

19 SUN Jodie Foster, 38 ***contact-themovie.warnerbros.com***
Meg Ryan, 39 ***www.filmsite.org/when.html***

20 MON ATP Tour tennis event in Stockholm ***www.tennis.com***
Bo Derek, 44 ***www.boderek.com***

21 TUES Tom Edison announced his 'talking machine' in 1877 ***www.mp3.com***
Goldie Hawn, 55 ***www.fansites.com/goldie_hawn.html***

22 WED Margaret Thatcher resigned as Prime Minister in 1990 ***www.iron-lady.com***
Jamie Lee Curtis, 42 ***www.x-search.com/jlc***

28 TUE Picasso's *Acrobat and Harlequin* painting sells for $38.46million, 1988 ***www.club-internet.fr/picasso***
Anna Nicole Smith, 33 ***www.annanicolesmith.org***

29 WED BBC Good Food Show ***www.bbc.co.uk/food***
The Larry Sanders Show star, Garry Shandling, 51 ***www.hbo.com/larry***

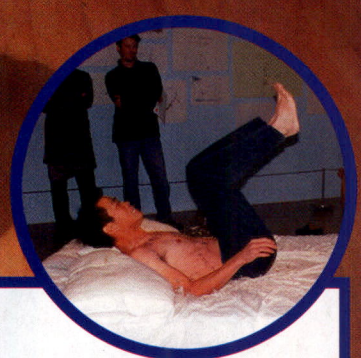
30 THUR Billy Idol, 45 ***www.billyidol.com***
St Andrew's Day ***www.scotland-calling.com/culture/st-andrew.htm***

DEC 1 FRIDAY Lady Astor elected first female member of Parliament in 1919 ***www.open.gov.uk***
Woody Allen, 65 ***mrshowbiz.go.com/people/woodyallen/index***

2 SAT European Film Awards ***www.filmfestivals.com***
Tennis ace Monica Seles, 27 ***www.monica-seles.com***

WORDS: MATT CHAPMAN; PICTURES: KOBAL, PA, NEWSMAKERS

The invisible man woke up to an audience



28 Turner Prize

TUES **Turner Prize, November 28**

Steve McQueen (no, not the late actor) may have won the 1999 Turner Prize for his video installations, but Tracey Emin stole the show with her 'bed' sculpture. Looking like the sort of exhibition you can find in any student dorm room, it came complete with empty vodka bottles and overflowing ashtrays. This year's shortlist sees four artists vying for the £20,000 prize, including Glenn Brown, Michael Raedecker, Tomoko Takahashi and Wolfgang Tillmans. ***www.tate.org.uk***

13 MON — Robert Louis Stevenson born, 1850 ***www.bibliomania.com/Fiction/stevensn***
Whoopi Goldberg, 51 ***www.whoopi.com***

14 TUES — Apollo 12 launched 1969 ***www.solarviews.com/eng/apo12.htm***
Claude Monet born, 1840 ***www.mfa.org/monetsworld***

15 WED — Hull Literature Festival ***www.virtual-hull.com***
Petula Clark, 68 ***www.geocities.com/Broadway/4016***

16 THUR — Humanity Awards ***www.redcross.org.uk***
First batch of Beaujolais Nouveau hits the shops ***www.beaujolais.net***

17 FRI — Danny DeVito, 56 ***mrshowbiz.go.com/people/dannydevito***
Martin Scorsese, 58 ***www.godamongdirectors.com/scorsese***

23 THUR — First issue of *Life* Magazine published ***www.lifemag.com***
Billy the Kid born, 1859 ***www.geocities.com/Heartland/Plains/4743/bkid.html***

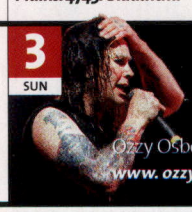
24 FRI — Christmas at Graceland ***www.elvis.com***
First live murder on TV in 1963, as Jack Ruby shoots Lee Harvey Oswald ***www.thelonegunman.com***

25 SAT — European Championship Basketball: England v Slovak Republic ***www.nebl.com***
Christina Applegate, 29 ***www.christina-applegate.com***

26 SUN — The Fab Four hold their first recording session as 'The Beatles', 1962 ***www.moptops.com***
Tina Turner, 62 ***www.tina-turner.com***

27 MON — Bruce Lee born, 1940 ***www.jkd.com***
Nobel Prize established, 1895 ***nobelprizes.com***

3 SUN



Ozzy Osbourne, 52 ***www.ozzynet.com***

4 MON — Davis Cup Final ***www.daviscup.org***
Actress Marisa Tomei, 36 ***www.famousbabes.com/marisa/marisa.htm***

5 TUE — Royal Variety Performance ***www.eabf.org.uk***
Walt Disney born in 1901 ***www.disney.com***

6 WED — Carols for Christmas at Westminster Cathedral ***christmas.com/carols***
UK joined US Star Wars project in 1985 ***www.theforce.net***

7 THUR — Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour in 1941 ***www.pearlharbour.com***
20,000th performance of Agatha Christie's *Mousetrap* ***christie.mysterynet.com***

Let's win it!

Wide-screen TVs and MP3 players are the kind of kit you can make great savings on at LetsBuyIt.com – but *the net* is giving them away!

At LetsBuyIt.com, you can link up with fellow punters to obtain amazing discounts on anything from cars and bikes to sports gear and computers.

The more people you join up with from LetsBuyIt's one million members, the cheaper the price gets.

Of course, you'll also find the latest in home electronics available on the LetsBuyIt.com Website – such as Sony's 32in Wega widescreen digital TV and Rio MP3 players. But even the incredible buying power people can command when they join together can't match this offer: we've teamed up with LetsBuyIt.com to give away three TVs and eight Rio MP3 players.

All you've got to do to be in with a chance of getting hold of one of these amazing prizes is to take a look at LetsBuyIt.com Website, then answer this simple question:

How many product categories are there at www.letsbuyit.com?

a 9
b 10
c 11

Visit our Web site at *www.thenetnow.co.uk*, click on competitions and follow the link to *www.letsbuyit.com* Once you've found the answer, email it to back to us by 19th December 2000.

letsbuyit.com

TERMS & CONDITIONS The closing date for entries is 19th December 2000. Entrants must be resident in the UK. The prize winners will be chosen from all the correct entries received by 19th December 2000. All prize winners will be notified within 2 weeks of the draw. No cash alternative of substitute prizes will be allowed. The competition organisers reserve the right to supply a prize of similar value and specification if the named prize is unavailable. The decision of the organisers is final and no correspondence will be entered into. Information on the winners of the competition will be available within 2 weeks of the published closing date and will be supplied upon receipt of a stamped self-addressed envelope.

Send your letters to: Inbox, *the net*, 38-42 Hampton Road, Teddington, Middlesex TW11 0JE or email us at ***inbox@thenetnow.co.uk***

READER'S LETTER OF THE MONTH

Dear thenet,

While surfing I've come across a new phenomena on the Web: ***www.mezzowave.com***. There's nothing else like it! It's a relaxation site that's had a profound effect on me.

After watching the 'healing page', my after-work stress and slight headache disappeared. I also felt that the space in the room – even after I switched the computer off – was different, almost celestial. It really addressed my need for relaxation. How did they do it?

Margaret Warner
via email

Here at the net, *we relax after work with a three-hour bout of* Quake III Arena. *But how about you, the readers? Has anyone else noticed a spatial re-arrangement after Mezzowave laid its healing hands upon you?*

'Your toupe's a perfect fit, sir'

PICTURE: CORBIS

Dear thenet,

May I point out that your review of animal rights sites gives the impression that you strongly approve of their activities (*What Website?*, November 2000). However, I myself wouldn't accept medicine that hadn't been properly tested – which means, in most cases, on animals.

Then there's that animal rights faction who, were they labelled 'Maoist' or 'Shining Light', would be deemed terrorists. There is an enormous difference between care for animal welfare and going along with these people. Indeed, there's nothing in common.

But there are sites which offer a different perspective, like ***www.simr.org.uk***, which is run by an extraordinary group of ill people. These individuals are dedicated to the task of keeping funds flowing into medical research – which requires testing on animals.

The only weapon *they* use is information.

Keith Bell
via email

None of our featured sites condone the use of violence, and, of course, neither do we. RSPCA Online – hardly the Red Brigade, are they?

Dear thenet,

Your guide to student Web sites (*The Best Years of Your Life*, October 2000) said that the four co-founders of StudentNet had moved on to work at Student- World – an entirely different site.In fact, they're actually working with me at ***www.studentuncovered.com***.

Featuring news, articles, competitions, games, useful advice provided by animated characters, local listings, reviews of games, films and CDs, plus a complementary freshers' site, there's plenty to keep students happy instead of lectures.

Sorry – I meant to say 'in-between' lectures.

Jim Leavold
Editor
www.studentuncovered.com

nextmonth

THAT WAS THE YEAR THAT WAS
Highs, lows, laughs, tears: 12 months in the history of the Internet

IT COULD BE YOU!
Win a million on the Web – we show you how

Another perfect Xmas...

...thanks to *the net*'s Christmas Countdown!

PICTURE: KOBAL

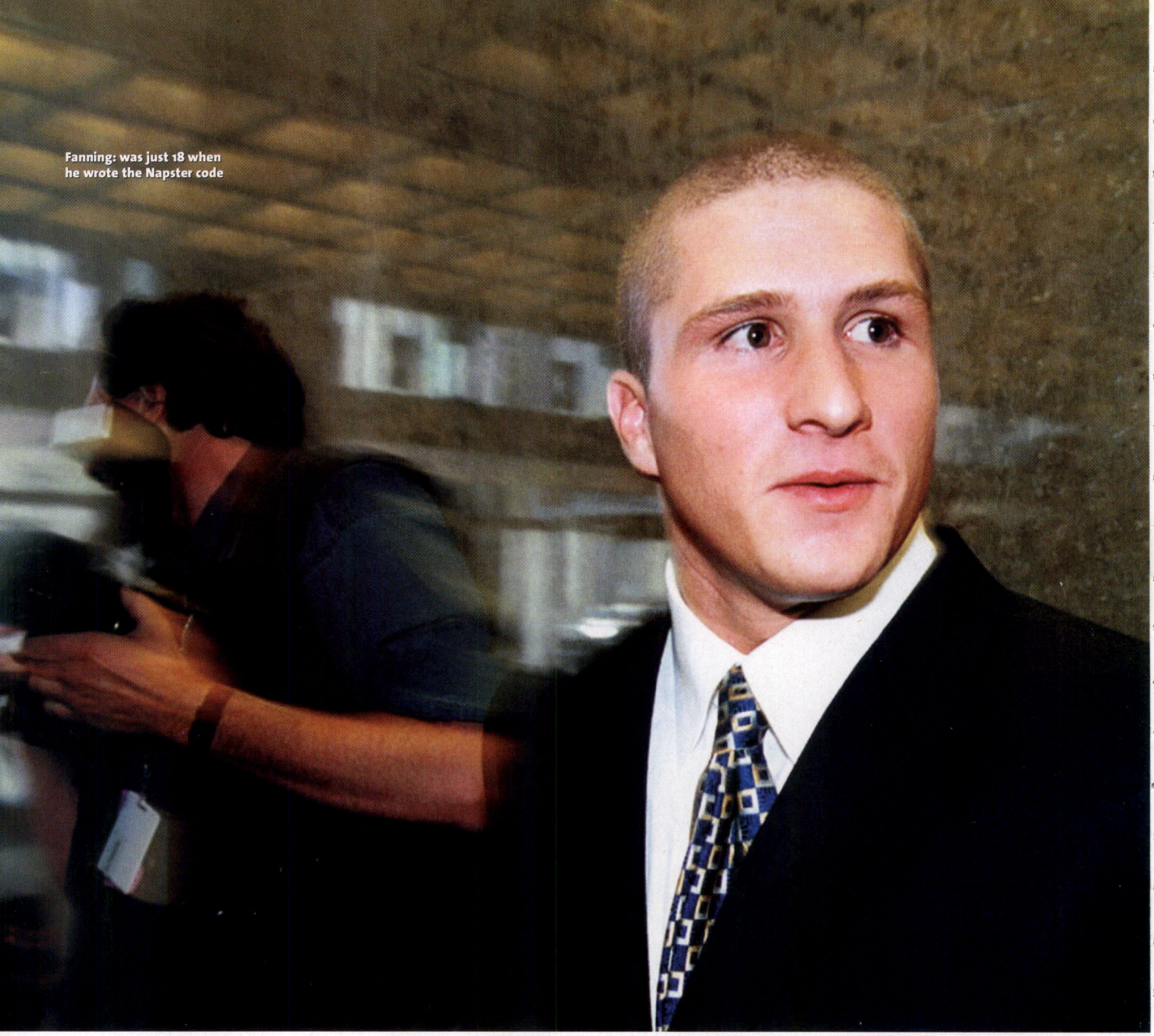
thenet Next issue on sale Wednesday December 6

David went to St. Mary's Primary School.
So did Peter.

David played up front for Clifford Rovers.
So did Peter.
David lost his virginity to Julie Gordon.
So did Peter.
David left school and moved to London.
So did Peter.
David found a 1965 Lambretta on QXL.com
and placed a bid for it.
So did Peter.

Some things are best kept to yourself.

QXL.com
online auctions



Fanning: was just 18 when he wrote the Napster code

FACING THE MUSIC

No17 NAPSTER www.napster.com

Don't you just love it when you haven't got enough money to buy the great new album you want, but one of your mates has already bought it and makes you a copy? And it's just about legal according to the law as it stands, because you're allowed to share music with your friends and family. The problem is that the law wasn't anticipating that anyone would have 20 million friends – but if you're a Napster user then that's exactly the situation you find yourself in.

Napster is a piece of file-sharing software. It allows you to search for files on the hard drive of other Napster users – specifically MP3 files. If you like what you see you can download it directly from their machine to yours. If everyone copies their CD collections onto their PCs, you've got just about every record ever released – and a few that weren't – available to download. It's not a situation the record industry is likely to find amusing, which is why Napster has recently spent more time in court than Jeffrey Archer.

Ignoring the legal wrangling for a minute, let's extol the virtues of Napster. It's a phenomenal piece of software and is ridiculously easy to use. Once you've installed it you simply type in the artist or song you are looking for and, if you like what you see, you download it.

Napster is the brainchild of Shawn Fanning. Last year, the then 18-year-old was pondering the difficulties of finding good MP3 content on the Web, and dreamt up a solution. His idea was to combine the instant messaging system of Internet Relay Chat, the file-sharing capabilities of the Windows Operating System and the search capabilities of search engines. It took him just three months to merge them – and Napster was born.

Whatever happens to the software now, it will always be one of the most important applications the Web has ever seen. According to figures from market researcher Webnoize, 1.4 *billion* MP3s were exchanged by its users in September alone.

Not that everyone is quite so enthusiastic, of course. Metallica were the first band to express their displeasure through the courts. Drummer Lars Ulrich was tipped off about masses of people illegally downloading their song from the *Mission Impossible* soundtrack via Napster. In the blink of an eye, Napster found itself being sued by Metallica for copyright infringement. Rapper Dr Dre was quick to follow and, if that wasn't enough, the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) – representing five major record companies – heightened the pressure by demanding that the site be shut down.

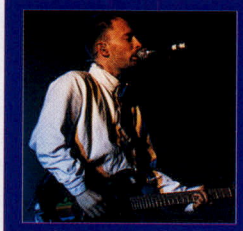
WORDS: PAUL WINSLOW; PICTURES: LIAISON, RETNA

NAPSTER 20 million friends

Napster: music sharing or music pirating?

WHAT IS IT? File-sharing software allowing users to locate MP3 files on other peoples' PCs – and download them.
LAUNCHED 1999.
TRAFFIC 20 million users.
BASE California.
KEY FEATURES The software is and always will be the main attraction of the site, although it also has a selection of featured artists.

NAPSTER: FOR AND AGAINST



'The cool thing about Napster is that it... encourages enthusiasm for music in a way that the music industry has long forgotten to do'
Thom Yorke, Radiohead

'If someone chooses to download my songs or an album of mine, I'm very flattered' Moby

'The first thing we should do is get all the f**** millionaires to shut their mouths, stop bitching about the 25 cents a time they're losing'**
Dave Grohl, Foo Fighters

'I just don't see why you should be expected to give away the fruits of your labour for nothing'
Brian Molko, Placebo

'We're suing Napster for one reason and one reason only: because they exist to pirate music, nothing more, nothing less'
Lars Ulrich, Metallica

'They [Napster] created a monster'
Judge Marilyn Hall Patel

In the first court hearing between the RIAA and Napster, Judge Marilyn Hall Patel agreed – and demanded the closure of the site. In an eleventh-hour reprieve, Napster staved off that threat with a stay until a full trial could be heard.

It's not that everyone in the music industry is against Napster. Some of the biggest stars actively support it. Chuck D, he of Public Enemy and a staunch MP3 advocate, is a big fan, and he's not alone. U2's Bono told Billboard.com: 'It's cool for people to share our music – as long as no one is making money from the process.' Madonna added her support, telling *Rolling Stone*: 'Napster could be a great way for people to hear your music who wouldn't have the chance to hear it on the radio.' Dave Grohl of the Foo Fighters, Thom Yorke of Radiohead and Moby are some of the other stars who have supported the program. You can check out all the quotes at ***www.napster.com/speakout/artists.html***. But the courts aren't interested in what people think, just what the law states. So what are the arguments?

We know the RIAA is accusing Napster of gross copyright violations, more specifically 'contributory infringement'. That's where it is inciting and providing the ability for copyright violation.

The defence is based around a couple of existing related rulings. Napster believes its product is legal under current laws which allow non-commercial music copying and sharing (so far, Napster doesn't make any money). The RIAA says that law was not intended to cover a group the size of Napster's user base. Another defence relies heavily on a 16-year-old ruling called 'Sony'. The US Supreme Court ruled that Sony couldn't be held responsible for owners using its video recorders for copyright infringement. The logic behind the decision was that although videos could be used for such activity, they also had uses which did not infringe copyright. The court decided it was more important to protect the fair use of videos than to punish infringement when considering the manufacturers of the product.

Napster's remaining defence is based on a law which protects Internet Service Providers from illegal acts committed by its users on the grounds they cannot be held responsible for what people get up to online. It's also pushing home the point that at no point does the music ever reside on Napster's servers – the transaction is a direct one between the two parties.

Effectively the whole issue boils down to the fact that Napster knows and admits that most (probably all) of its users engage in copyright violation; indeed it distances itself and condemns those practices on its site. However, it is adamant it is not responsible for what users do with its software. Let's just hope the courts agree.

The ruling on Napster is going to be one of the biggest in Internet history. Overdramatic? Well, everyone knows there is a huge issue with copyright violation, and this decision will represent a watershed. If the courts rule in favour of Napster we can all look forward to years of happy music-sharing. If it rules against, then we can expect enough similar lawsuits against other sites to keep the lawyers in business till retirement beckons.

Shawn Fanning has a lot to answer for – let's hope for our sake he's allowed to continue.

WELCOME TO THE S-FILES

It's just like having Statto sitting right there on your desktop

SOCCER-FILES.COM

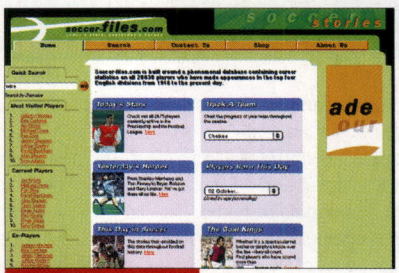
www.soccer-files.com

As any schoolboy football fan will know, half the fun of following the beautiful game has always been the endless minutiae of statistics and facts that surround it. From the *Rothmans Football Yearbook* to Panini stickers, any piece of information (players' heights, birthplaces, games, goals – you name it) is eagerly pounced upon.

But it's the *Footballers' Factfile*, first published in 1980, which has long been considered the bible for the anally retentive fan, giving the playing records and personal details of every single post-war professional footballer – a total of over 20,000 players. So what sort of fool goes and makes the whole lot available on the Internet for free?

Barry Hugman, that's who. The mastermind and researcher of the *Factfile* since day one – and consequently one of the most in-demand pub quiz partners in the whole of Britain – doesn't see it as a problem. 'If you want to refer instantly to lots of different players, you'll still go to the book. They'll exist side-by-side, because people still like a book in their hands as well as the Internet.'

Soccer-Files.com is a magnificent resource for any student of the game. Just type in a player's name and a full statistical breakdown appears in seconds. As it's cross-referenced, you can search by club or year, too. Looking for that Hull City left-back of the early 60s? Wondering who played upfront for Mansfield in 1977? It's all here, and many of the players are accompanied by photographs and profiles too. 'There's something on everyone, from post-war players in baggy shorts to the guy who made his debut last night and drove home in a Porsche,' says content editor Tony Lynch.

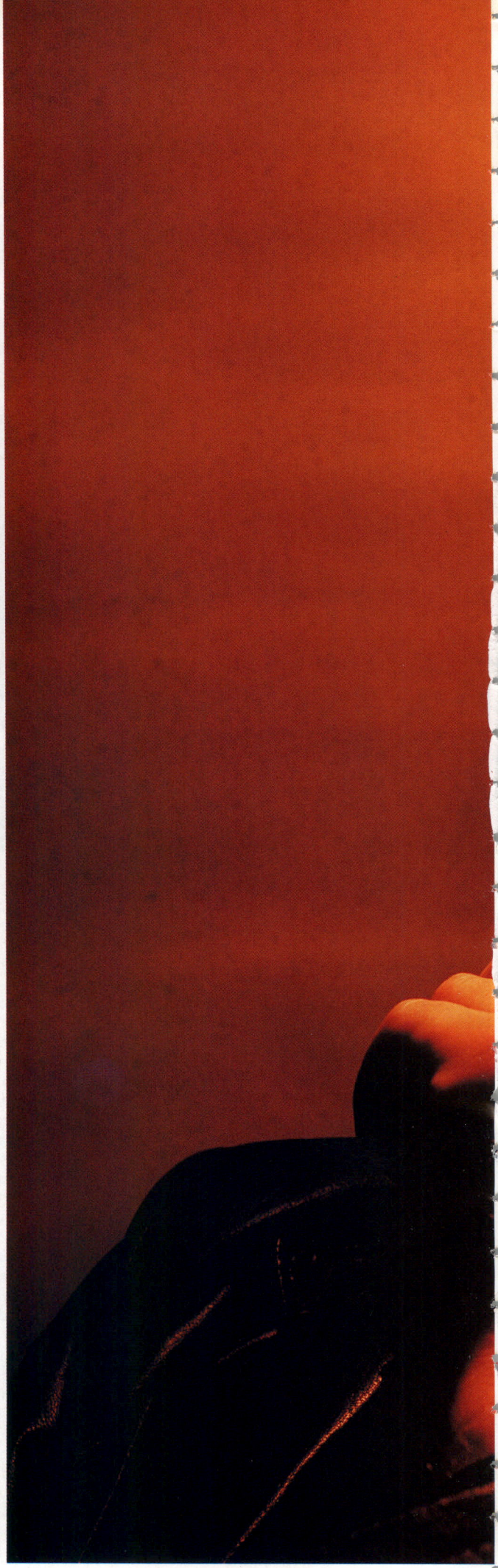


'If I'd known the size of the task, I'd never have started'

Hugman still does the lion's share of the research ('If I'd known the size of the task, I'd never have started,' he admits), having begun record-keeping in the 70s, searching through League records, newspaper reports and consulting club historians to create the only definitive database of players. Well, almost definitive – 29 players, all of whom made one Football League appearance apiece, are still unaccounted for...

Soccer-Files will expand into other sports, creating similar databases as well as selling posters and photos of particular players to make themselves financially viable. Marketing manager Jamie Mabbs hopes to make it the biggest football site around. The first e-millionaire anoraks? Don't bet against them.

WORDS: ROBERT JEFFERY (SOCCER-FILES); MATTHEW BINGHAM (IDEADOLLAR); PICTURES: STEVE ORINO



PENNY FOR YOUR THOUGHTS

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How many times have you been struck by a great idea? There's an exhilarating rush of invention followed by a crushing return to reality, as you realise that your dream of a grass-powered torch is going to mean five years spent tinkering in a potting shed getting the thing to work, followed by the misery and expense of applying for patents and finding a manufacturer. So you forget about it, and get on with your humdrum life...

Well, not any more. Mark Turrell, CEO and founder of ideadollar.com, wants your flashes of inspiration. Become a member at *www.ideadollar.com*, submit your idea and, after it's assessed by a team of experts, Mark will pay you with virtual cash – up to i$100 – that you can spend straight away at sites like Amazon, Art.com and FragranceNet. Then he'll post your brainwave on the Web site where fellow inventors can add their comments, join together for further development, and even find an industrial partner. At which point, you stand to make thousands of *real* dollars.

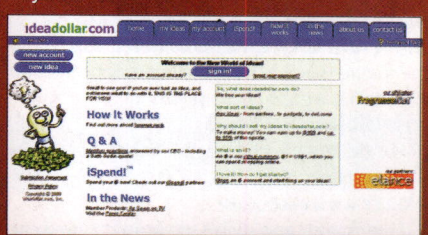
'We've received 5,000 ideas so far, with 400-plus arriving every week, and have already paid out i$12,000,' Mark says. 'There are 60 products already in development. They include the "Shower Poster", a waterproof, laminated, full-size poster complete with suction cups – so you could shower with Britney Spears, for example; LavaMac – a thin layer of "lava" covering a PC or Mac, which came from a housewife in Bristol; and a back razor, for men with hairy backs.'

'We know which ideas will make money'

Still to be picked up by big business are a talking cruet set and MrNiceGuy.com ('Get your ex-girlfriends to give you references!'). But how does Mark stop his members from being ripped off? 'Each idea is tracked extensively as it goes through the process, so we know which is the one that will make money,' he explains. 'We keep people informed throughout.'

Of course, budding inventors could make more money by going it alone. 'But not without personal cost,' says Mark. 'To file a patent can cost £2,000, and even then you have no guarantee you'll ever see any cash. The idea of toiling away in a garage to re-invent the vacuum cleaner sounds very heroic, but your family life might suffer! We take the cost and the effort away from the everyday inventor, and we use our business expertise and connections to speed up the introduction of new ideas into the market.'

So look out for that laminated Britney any day now...



PISTE UP!

Whether it's skiing or snowboarding that gets you going, get kitted up online

Those two little words 'winter holiday' will, for some, conjure up images of sun-drenched beaches in far-flung foreign locales where the most you'll ever wear is factor 15.

Other people, however, will grab as many warm layers as they can, together with skis, boots and poles, and head off for the nearest snowdrift.

If you fall into the latter camp, your favourite part of the year has arrived. The chalets and slopes are beckoning but, before you head off to the white yonder, make sure you're fully kitted out – courtesy of the Web. SkiPages.com (*www.skipages.com*) is a good site to start from. This excellent portal has loads of links and information on absolutely everything to do with skiing. Find sites on essentials, from goggles to snowboards, resort reviews to snow levels. It also has a booking service for holidays, as well as offering discounts on various destinations.

Once you've got your holiday sorted, your main concerns will centre around clothing needs.

The chalets and slopes are beckoning, but stock up online first

Neon is back – well, it is according to that arbiter of style, CNN. Its informative guide to dressing correctly for the cold can be found at *www.cnn.com/TRAVEL/NEWS/9902/25/skiwear*, along with other ski-related features.

One good place to shop for those essential layers is 9 Feet (*www.9feet.com*), with a huge range of performance tops and fleeces for sale, plus an accessories section with everything from watches to mittens.

But remember, you don't have to be a powder freak to appreciate the best bit of any snow-related holiday – the après ski.

HOW THE SITES COMPARE

BLACKS *www.blacks.co.uk*
The funky online arm of this major outdoor/ski specialist store offers a large selection of well-known brands. ★★★★★

SNOW AND ROCK *www.snowandrock.co.uk*
Comprehensive site from the huge high street outdoor and skiwear experts has a good online selection. ★★★★★

O'NEILL *www.oneill.com*
A well-designed and in-depth offering from these surfwear gurus. Layer up here. ★★★★

OAKLEY *www.oakley.com*
A rather snazzy and stylish site from the eyewear specialists – you can also find a range of goggles and watches here. ★★★★

NORDICA *www.nordica.com*
Learn all about the latest advances in ski development and manufacture at this flash – and Flash-heavy – site. ★★★★

CASIO *www.casio.co.uk*
Gen up on all the latest techy releases at this in-depth, detailed site, with products thoroughly explained. ★★★

THE GADGET SHOP *www.thegadgetshop.com*
Gadget freaks, this site is for you – packed as it is with all manner of essential kit you never knew you needed. ★★★★

BARGAIN SKI WEAR *www.bargainskiwear.com*
This large, warehouse-style American site has loads of great deals on ski clothes and accessories. ★★★★

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WORDS: CLAIRE MCHATTIE; PICTURES: NICK WRIGHT, CORBIS

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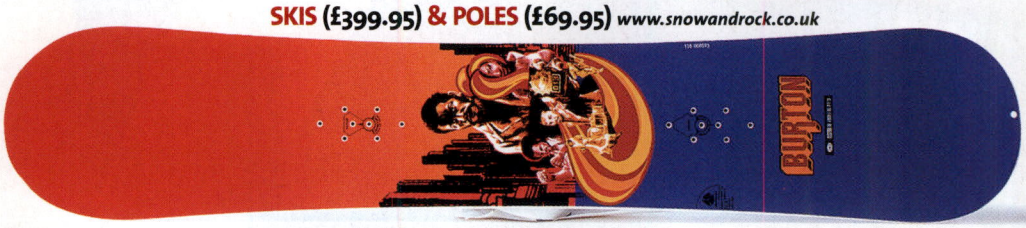

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SKI PANTS £159 *www.snowandrock.co.uk*

SKI PANTS £49.99 *www.blacks.co.uk*

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www.oneill.com

GOGGLES £90
www.oakley.com

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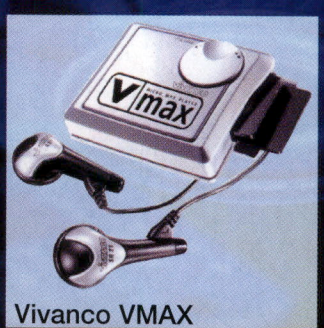

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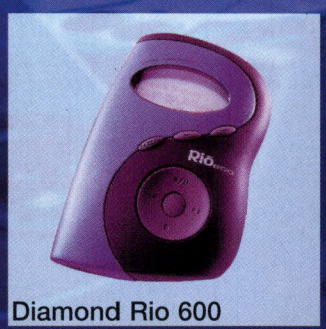

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You're having a laugh!

There's comedy to be found on the Internet. Not cheesy 'How many Microsoft engineers...' jokes, but fantastic new material from Britain's funniest performers

UNTIL RECENTLY, THE BIGGEST joke on the Web was the financial optimism of Internet start-ups. You're going to sign up 30 million paying customers? Stop, you're killing me!

But now, comedy's getting onto the Net in a big way. And we don't mean the dozens of smutty jokes that clog up email inboxes each Monday morning. Online comedy is serious business, with big names premiering their latest material on the Web.

A new, and highly professional, name in Net laughter is British Web Broadcasting (***www.bwebb.tv***), formed from an unlikely alliance between Jonathan Cole, chairman of Computer Warehouse, and Robert Llewellyn, the writer and actor best known as Kryten from *Red Dwarf*. The enterprise came about by accident, when Robert began putting video clips on his own Web site, ***www.llew.co.uk***, about 18 months ago.

'I started really, really amateurishly,' admits Robert, 'and in the process I dropped my camera and damaged it very badly. Because I'd bought it at Computer Warehouse, I took it back there. Someone at the store had read my first novel, and it was then that we started talking.'

Online comedy is serious business, with big names premiering their latest material on the Web

Jonathan takes up the story: 'When I first had a chat with Robert about a year ago, we came up with this idea that it would be really neat to have our own broadcasting company. We thought it would be more expensive than going to football, but cheaper than playing polo. We were wrong. It's more expensive than playing polo.'

The duo's plan to make money is based on what Robert calls 'the "dry bed revenue stream" model – there's a revenue stream there, just nothing in it yet.' Jonathan is optimistic, though, citing licensing deals and the advertisements that will soon pop up between clips on the BWebB homepage.

The comedy on offer at BWebB is mostly a combination of sketch-based humour and sitcoms, chopped into Web-sized chunks and streamed as QuickTime movies. Robert pops up in LetsReallyTalkAboutOurProblems.com, the ongoing story of caring-sharing therapist brothers Jerry and Tom, which also stars Nigel Planer.

Robert is something of a Net-head: he does all his grocery shopping online and has maintained a home page for four years, ever since a bunch of *Red Dwarf*-loving Microsoft engineers ▶

WORDS: JAMES SNODGRASS; PICTURE: STEVE ORINO; PICTURES: BBC, CORBIS, KOBAL, RETNA

Clockwise from top left: BWebB's Charlie Dancey, Jonathan Cole, Nigel Planer and Robert Llewellyn

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DDB

asked for his URL. He didn't know what they meant, so they gave him some Web design software and told him to go to it...

Nigel is less Web-savvy, and got involved through Robert: 'He's a bit more of a nerd than me.' The pair started toying about with their characters a few years ago after writing a book, *Therapy And How To Avoid It*. There were hopes that they could turn them into a Channel 4 sitcom. 'Unfortunately it never got made,' says Nigel, 'because the people at Channel 4 all switched jobs. But we thought it would be ideal for this new format.'

The sitcom comes in three- or four-minute episodes that have been shot and optimised for Web broadcast by professional directors like BWebb's Charlie Dancey. 'We've learnt from experience,' explains Jonathan. 'We now know what to look for and we now know how to shoot.'

Since LetsReallyTalkAboutOurProblems.com made its Web debut earlier this year, TV companies have been knocking on the door. Jonathan says: 'We're getting quite a lot of enquiries from terrestrial broadcasters, who want to turn it into a half-hour sitcom.'

But rather than return to the world of TV, Robert is looking forward to a time when more Internet users have broadband access. 'I've seen DSL and T1 connections in the US where a three-and-a-half minute film takes just two or three seconds to download. That makes it feel like watching TV.'

Of course, as well as a stint playing the hopeless hippy, Neil, in the *Young Ones*, Nigel Planer famously voiced-over a series of that animated classic, *The Magic Roundabout*. And he's quite found of Web animations: 'I like those little three-minute cartoons and jokes that get whisked around.' But not all the animation on the Web is up to *Magic Roundabout* standards...

A radio campaign posed the question: 'When was the last time you wet yourself at work?'

'A lot isn't very good,' says Laughing Stock's Mike O'Brien. 'They've started with pictures then, almost as an afterthought, got someone to do a voiceover or write a script. But if you start with a very strong idea, a good animator can make something from it.'

Laughing Stock, which was founded nine years ago to produce comedy tapes and videos, now employs five Flash animators for its Comedy Circus site (***www.comedycircus.com***). Comedy Circus is the home to material from top-name comics and performance poets, including Eddie Izzard and John Hegley.

Lost in the woods, Florence was worried – she'd seen *Blair Witch*...

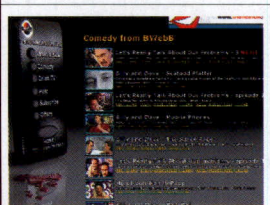
Some of this is streamed as audio on the site's radio channel (which is updated monthly), while other clips are married to Flash animations to make cartoons and video-cards. But it's not just comedy material that's on offer. The site also has a search engine to help you find comedy gigs in your area, and a shop selling over 100 Laughing Stock and 500 BBC comedy titles.

Comedy Circus was recently advertised with a radio campaign posing the question: 'When was the last time you wet yourself at work?' So it's not surprising to find out that the site's patrons tend to be bored wage-slaves. 'It seems to be mainly people in the office,' says Mike. 'The heaviest traffic is lunchtime – between 12 and 2pm – and then in the early evening, at the end of the day.'

The office is probably the best place to view comedy on the Net for two reasons. First: during a working day you could probably do with a laugh. Second: you're more likely to be on a high-bandwidth connection at work than you are at home. While cable and DSL modems are something of a novelty in the UK, their use is growing rapidly in the US – which doesn't do BWebB any harm. 'British comedy is quite hot in the USA, so we're getting quite a few subscribers coming from over there,' says Jonathan.

Nigel Planer agrees. Although he wouldn't compromise too much for an international audience – 'you'd end up talking rubbish' – he recognises the subject of his online sitcom is one that's very understandable to an American market: the Yanks really do love to talk about their problems.

the net's five funniest sites Our pick of the best original comedy on the Web



BRITISH WEB BROADCASTING

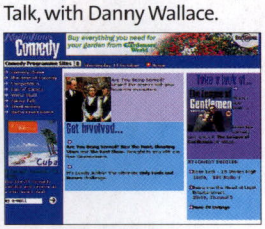
www.bwebb.tv

The brainchild of Robert Llewellyn and Computer Warehouse boss Jonathan Cole is a feast of made-for-the-Web streaming comedy. As well as Llewellyn and Nigel Planer's sitcom, there's Billy and Dave's ruminations on life's great questions (such as what mobile phone to buy) and an address from Sir Les Patterson. Streaming video is available in three sizes, optimised for 56k, ISDN and DSL/T1 connections. The streaming works best if you're using a big-name service provider.

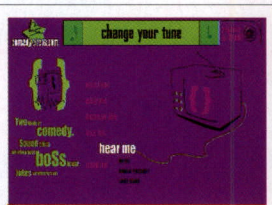
BBC COMEDY ZONE

www.comedyzone.beeb.com

Look around beeb.com and find mini sites covering BBC classics such as *Fawlty Towers*, plus an *Only Fools and Horses* game. But best of all is the comedy news section, Funny Talk, with Danny Wallace.



Danny started writing about comedy in 1996 when he published ComedyWeb (***www.comedyweb.co.uk***). The then-unknown hack foist himself upon the nation's comics at the Edinburgh Fringe and built up an enviable archive of reviews. Now you can test his comedy knowledge with the beeb's 'Challenge Danny'.



COMEDY CIRCUS

www.comedycircus.com

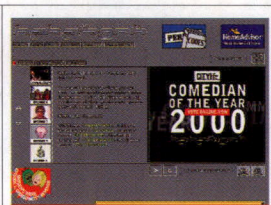
There's a wealth of comedy material signed up by Comedy Circus's parent company, Laughing Stock, giving this site a distinct head start. There's lots of stand-up clips in the radio section, plus interviews with the cream of comedy talent from Arnold Brown to Matt 'George Dawes' Lucas. There are also various comedy clips and comic poems (brought to life with Flash animations), a comedy shop and a searchable gig guide. Satire fans, meanwhile, can subscribe to the weekly e-zine *The Clap*.

COMEDY CENTRAL

www.comedycentral.com

Comedy Central is the American cable network responsible for bringing us *South Park*. There are *South Park* 'toons aplenty on this site, plus the chance to download clips of Britcom

faves like *Bob and Margaret* and *Absolutely Fabulous*. And to dispel any myths about the American sense of humour there's also a *League of Gentlemen* mini-site, with an English/American slang guide to help those poor Yanks who don't understand what a 'fortnight' means. (Two weeks, by the way.)



HAHABONK

www.hahabonk.com

Its creators refer to it as a comedy community rather than a destination site... which means that HHB material can be found on other people's Web sites. But it's not just HHB's collection of live, streaming stand-up, cartoons and sitcoms that will bring you to the parent site – there's also a comedy forum and a shop where you can buy 'random comedy crap'. The site might bring the UK's best new stand-up talent to an international audience, but the design has an icy, cool look that doesn't scream 'funny'.

If only they could bottle it!

All too many 'comedy' sites lack an essential factor: humour. You've met our five funniest but rest assured – these contenders are nipping on their heels in the laughter stakes

UNOFFICIAL BORAT HOMEPAGE

www.webgeordie.co.uk/borat

Sacha Baron-Cohen's Kazakhstani reporter looks likely to get his own Channel 4 series. This is an unofficial site, but it appears to have the stamp of approval of Ali G's creator.

BRITISH COMEDY

www.britishcomedy.org.uk

A lovingly-crafted look at bygone British comedy, with particular attention paid to Kenneth Williams, the Goons and *The Navy Lark* (people used to laugh at this?!).

COMEDY.COM

dailydose.z.com

American humour in abundance with daily jokes, gags by topic and even a joke search engine.

COMEDYRADIO

comedyradio.net

Oddly unprofessional-looking US site featuring some of the better American comics. There's classic comedy from Woody Allen and incomparable one-liners from the terminally deadpan Steven Wright.

COMEDYSTAR

www.comedystar.com

Slick British site with the latest news from the stand-up circuit. It's a comedy info-zone rather than a destination for surfers in need of an instant laughter fix.

COMEDY WORLD

www.comedyworld.com

Unmistakable American comedy site with streaming audio and video. There's some choice material – inbetween the dross from the likes of Scott Thompson and those unfunny Canucks, the Kids in the Hall.

PETER COOK

www.petercook.com

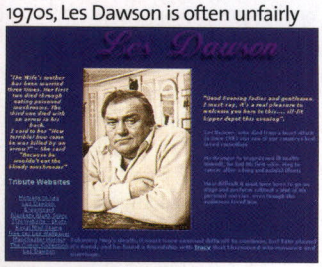
Five years after his death, master satirist Cook has an 'official' Web site with a wealth of information about the man himself. The involvement of his widow, Lin Chong-Cook, gives it its official stamp.

Princess Leia ran straight into the glass door

LES DAWSON

home.btclick.com/tracyd/les.htm

The god of UK TV comedy in the 1970s, Les Dawson is often unfairly



PICTURE: TED HUMBLE SMITH; PICTURES: BBC, CORBIS, KOBAL, RETNA

lumped in with the other Seventies 'comics' of the likes of Boardman, Grayson and Freddie 'Parrot Face' Davies. This rare Les site contains some of his great one-liners and links to other Dawson pages.

HAT-TRICK PRODUCTIONS

www.hattrick.com

The company behind shows such as *Whose Line is it Anyway?*, *Father Ted* and *Drop The Dead Donkey* has an extensive Web site covering its shows, its stars and, of course, things you can buy.

Allen: funny. For an American

BILL HICKS

www.sacredcowproductions.com/hicks

Hicks was the funniest and most outrageous comedian to come from the US since Lenny Bruce. Like Bruce, Hicks died young (in 1994, aged 32). This site, from his production company, contains a comprehensive selection of Hicks moments on MP3 and RealVideo. For further info and biog details, also check out ***www.billhicks.com***.

JOKE

www.joke.co.uk

Promising 'strictly no US humour', this UK comedy portal provides links to all aspects of British laughter, from jokes and comedians to stand-up venues. It even has a WAP service that will deliver jokes to your mobile phone. Comedy on the move!

THE JUNKIES

www.thejunkies.com

Shoestring sitcom starring Sally Phillips (*I'm Alan Partridge*, *Smack The Donkey*, *Hippies*) and Peter Baynham (*Armistice*, co-writer of *Brass Eye* and *Jam*). This class-A comedy was written by Jane Bussman and David Quantick, who also had a hand in *Jam*.

THE NET

www.thenetnow.co.uk

On our Web site you'll find our hand-picked selection of the very best Internet jokes and email attachments.

MAX MILLER

www.maxmiller.org

The original 'cheeky chappie' (ask your grandad) entertains from beyond the grave. The inspiration for 'Where's me washboard?'

MODERN HUMORIST

modernhumorist.com

The US political in-jokes and TV spoofs might leave British surfers puzzling, but there's still plenty to laugh at in this good-looking site.

ROB NEWMAN

www.robnewman.com

Back in 1992, comedy was the new rock 'n' roll and Rob Newman was Elvis. Then he disappeared for a few years, his whimsical observation humour replaced with a new politicism. Good to see Rob back, but this site is more pause for thought than game for a laugh.

HARRY SHEARER'S LE SHOW

www.timecast.com/channels/comedy/shearer

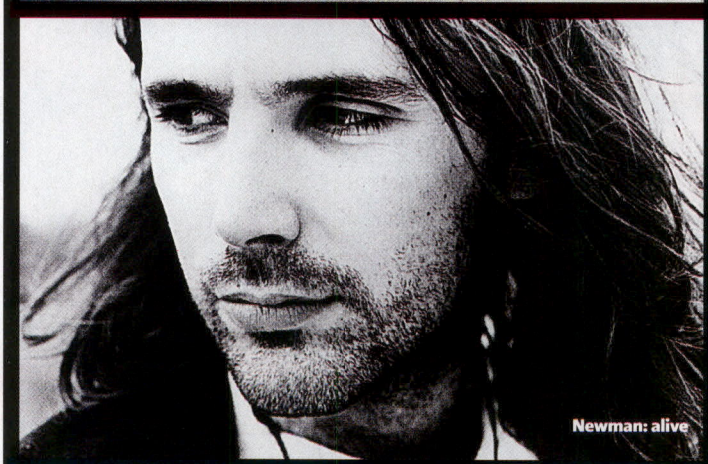
A weekly American Webcast – but don't let the country of origin put you off. Harry Shearer is a god. Not only was he bassist Derek Smalls in the classic *This is Spinal Tap*, but he is also the voice of both Mr Burns and Smithers on *The Simpsons*.

SPUMCO

www.spumco.com

This is animator John Kricfalusi's production company – the man behind the first, groundbreaking series of *Ren and Stimpy*, before Nickelodeon cruelly neutered the dysfunctional duo. John's latest comic creations can be viewed here.

Cook: dead



Newman: alive

Back in 1992, comedy was the new rock 'n' roll and Rob Newman was Elvis. Then he disappeared...

SUPERKAYLO

www.superkaylo.com

A bunch of crank calls and assorted japery from journalist Charlie Brooker. Offensive from the opening page, but quite funny, this site doesn't seem to have been updated since Brooker started appearing on BBC's digital TV channels.

MARK THOMAS

www.mtcp.co.uk

It's easy to forget that, before his

Hicks: dead, too

increasingly investigative style took to the fore, Mark Thomas was one of Britain's funniest stand-ups. This unofficial Comedy Product site has contributions from the man himself. An official site can be found at ***www.fnord.demon.co.uk/mt***.

URBAN 75

www.urban75.com

Perhaps the inspiration for BBC 2's 'Seethru' start-up in *Attachments*, this druggy, clubby site has numerous silly jokes and Shockwave games – from the now infamous 'Slap a Spice Girl' to the incomparable 'Draw your own Intestine'.

VIZ

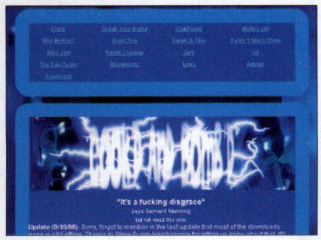
www.viz.co.uk

Not as funny as it used to be, but the online Roger's Profanisaurus just keeps growing. Soon there won't be a phrase left that doesn't have some sordid double-meaning.

WHY BOTHER? ARCHIVE

web.ukonline.co.uk/chilled/whybother.html

For those who like their humour bitter, Why Bother? has created an archive of Peter Cook and Chris Morris moments. With Channel 4 unlikely to repeat *Brass Eye* and *Jam* kicking up trouble, this might the only place to catch classic Morris.



FIVE OF THE WORST

THAT'S NOT FUNNY!

There are three types of bad humour, and all are sadly in abundance online. The first is comedy so unwitty that even Colin Hunt wouldn't add it to his lexicon of mirth. The second is the gratuitously offensive.

Then, of course, there's geek humour – jokes with a techy slant, like this, the worst joke in the world. Ever.

Q: 'How did the COBOL chicken cross the road?'

A: '0001-CHICKEN-CROSSING. IF NO-MORE-VEHICLES THEN PERFORM 0010-CROSS-THE-ROAD VARYING STEPS FROM 1 BY 1 UNTIL ON-THE-OTHER SIDE ELSE GO TO 0001-CHICKEN-CROSSING.'

And if you didn't like that, you certainly won't like these...

'When does the comedy start?'

ASSASSIN

www.newgrounds.com/assassin

Puerile US comedy in the 'isn't it fun to kill celebs with handguns' mould. Caused much controversy after the Columbine massacre. The Britney Spears monster truck death-crash animation might raise a chortle, though.

CAMP CHAOS

www.campchaos.com

American exercise in toilet humour. Not as offensive to the moral majority as Assassin, but with animations titled 'They Shoved A Camera Up My Ass' we're not talking incisive satire, either.

CATSARSE

www.catsarse.co.uk

This self-styled 'archive of rude and insensitive Internet humor' (sic) is proof that Americans don't have a monopoly on infantile 'adult' gags. A cleaner version is at ***www.thecatsarse.co.uk***.

DISAPPOINTMENT

www.log.dial.pipex.com

Joey Deacon jokes? Oh yes. This site's motto is: 'Laughing at other people less fortunate than myself made me the man I am today.'

NEWGROUNDS

www.newgrounds.com

Some online humour is so unfunny that even Colin Hunt wouldn't add it to his lexicon of mirth

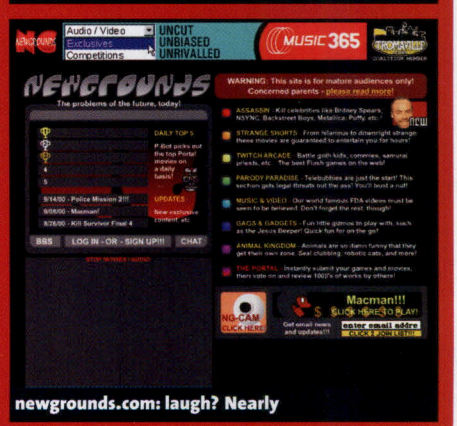
Home to Assassin, this US-based 'comedy' site also features parodies (including Teletubbies-as-pimps). Sample joke: 'Doctor, I can't feel anything.' 'Of course you can't, we've amputated your arms.'

TECHNOLOGY HUMOR

www.voiceone.com/html/techjoke.html

It's beyond parody. Stop them. Please.

campchaos.com: incisive satire? Er, no

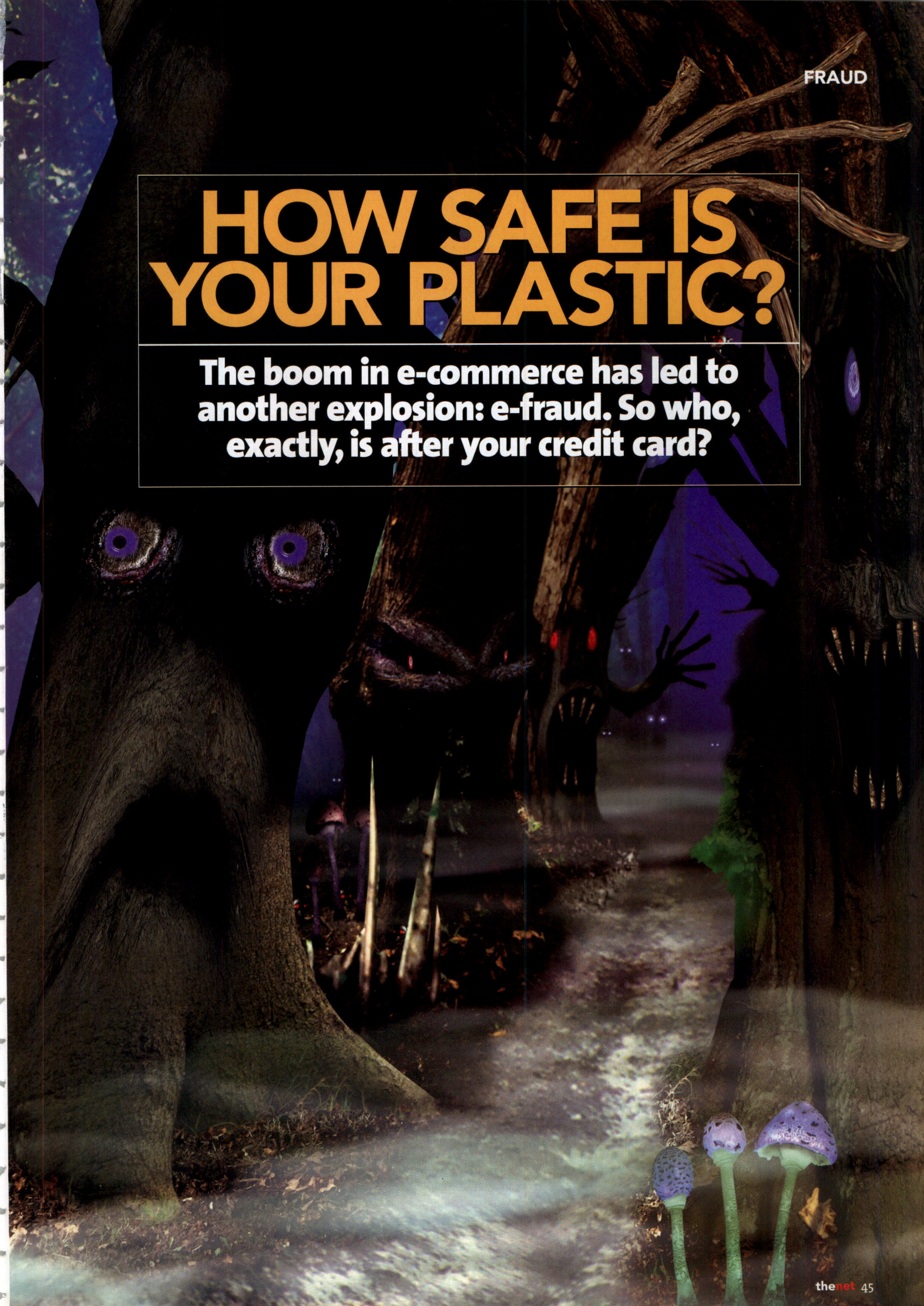


newgrounds.com: laugh? Nearly

ZINC CARD
4762 8977 8924 6046
A. MORON

HOW SAFE IS YOUR PLASTIC?

The boom in e-commerce has led to another explosion: e-fraud. So who, exactly, is after your credit card?



'He's ordered a 12in with extra anchovies'

THE SCAMS

1 PACKET READING

HOW IT WORKS Whenever you submit your credit card details over secure servers, they can be intercepted. Hackers with high levels of technical expertise locate patterns of data (like credit card digits) and copy them.

REAL-WORLD EQUIVALENT Somebody tapping your phone line, then waiting for you to read out your credit card number.

YOUR CHANCE OF BEING DONE Very small. As long as you're buying from a secure server (see panel), this scam is beyond all but the most professional of criminals. Only sophisticated decryption systems can make sense of all that information.

'A half-pound of Humbugs and the pitch is yours'

2 FRAUDULENT ONLINE AUCTION TRADING

HOW IT WORKS A registered seller on a respected Web site builds up a reputation, lists a bunch of items which he doesn't possess, and vanishes with the winning bidders' payment.

REAL-WORLD EQUIVALENT The geezer selling from the back of a lorry: you pay for brands and end up with imitations.

YOUR CHANCE OF BEING DONE High. The Internet Fraud Complaint Centre (***www.ifccfbi.gov***) reports that nearly half of the complaints it receives per week are related to online auctions.

It's your worst nightmare: your credit card bill arrives, but the figures don't tally up. You don't remember spending £180 at a Web site called 'Romanian Relations'. Panic sets in. You check all your invoices to be certain, but you know you've been ripped off. Somebody out there in cyberspace has your credit card details and is using them without permission.

You're not alone. According to the Association for Payment Clearing Services (***www.apacs.org.uk***), fraudulent online transactions worth millions of pounds were made last year in the UK alone. And with the international nature of the Net, this could be a fraction of the true figure that British consumers are being stung for.

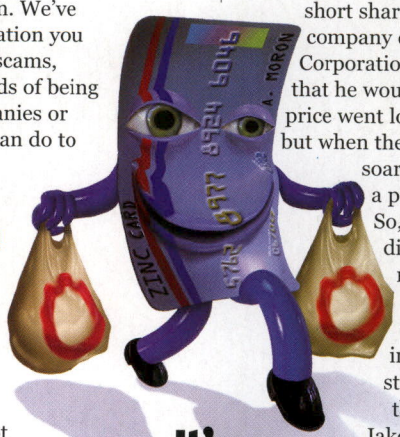
But before you flush your plastic down the toilet in fear, read on. We've compiled all the information you need to surf safely: the scams, how they work, your odds of being conned by online companies or hackers, and what you can do to protect yourself...

THEY WANT YOUR WALLET!

Two Kazakhstanis were arrested recently in London for allegedly breaking into financial experts Bloomberg's computer system in Manhattan in an attempt to extort money from the company. One had worked as a contractor for the firm, obtained sensitive information and e-blackmailed the billionaire head of the company, Michael Bloomberg, for $200,000. Several months after the first threat, they were arrested in a police sting operation at the London Hilton, and now face extradition to the US.

Two 18-year-olds were arrested in March by the Dyfed-Powys Police in Wales for violation of the Computer Misuse Act 1990. The pair were arrested in connection with alleged intrusions into e-commerce Web sites, obtaining up to 26,000 credit card numbers and using them to shop on the Net, ripping off goods worth more than £2m.

Mark Jakob, a 23-year-old Californian student, was arrested after fabricating false online press releases about a company's financial status to deflate its share price. Jakob had committed himself to sell short shares in a company called Emulex Corporation. This meant that he would profit if the price went low enough; but when the shares soared, Jakob faced a potential bill of $100,000. So, using his employer's news distribution service, he released false information claiming that Emulex was on the rocks. Panicked investors sold blocks of stock, wiping $2.5bn from the share price and turning Jakob's potential loss into a $250,000 profit. He was caught, however, after an investigation by the Securities and Exchange Commission.



It's a nightmare. Your credit card bill arrives, but the figures don't tally

Triumphs for the forces of law, one and all – but it's safe to assume that for every successful prosecution of an e-fraudster, there must be dozens of con artists, hackers and general scumbags getting away with it.

So just how much danger is your precious plastic in?

The Serious Fraud Office (***www.sfo.gov.uk***) highlights the growing problem in its latest annual report. 'Just as the Internet becomes more and more important to commercial and everyday life, so it will be used more and more as a medium for committing crime, especially fraud. The Internet gives access to a wide audience, both in this country and overseas, and exposes the audience in this country to overseas criminals. The need for the general public to obtain independent advice is as necessary for investments or schemes on the Internet as for any other way of advertising.'

The FBI's Web site (***www.fbi.com***), meanwhile, points out the need for a digital version of Interpol, where the world's intelligence agencies would work together to crack online crime. 'Working together, we can make the Internet a safe place for e-commerce.'

Because of the explosion of interest in the Net, the problem of online fraud has become as hyped as the potential for e-commerce. Despite only a tiny fraction of online purchases being fraudulent, the news media – both in its online versions as well as print and TV – has been responsible for the public misconception of the Internet as a dangerous, pitfall-ridden crime network.

While there are problems out there, the situation is nowhere near as bad as the press has implied. The Association for Payment Clearing Services underlines that the online problem is certainly no worse than the average rate of credit card fraud, as company spokesman Richard Tyson-Davies explains: 'From last year's figure of £190m in total

WORDS: ASHLEY COTTER-CAIRNS; ILLUSTRATION: MAX ELLIS; PICTURES: KOBAL, CORBIS

losses, we've calculated that just £4m-£5m was lost in online fraud. That's no better or no worse than the rate we'd expect, given the number of online transactions completed.'

In fact, a lot of 'online' fraud is actually based on old-fashioned thievery. The Marbles credit card (***www.getmarbles.co.uk***) was launched last year with a mission to allay customers' fears about e-shopping. According to Marbles' Martin Rutland, 'In many cases of online fraud, the actual card is stolen and the thief has then used it to shop over the Net.'

However, there is an indication that online credit card fraud is spreading. 'Overseas complaints are sharply higher, and it's common for consumers to purchase goods abroad over the Net,' says Tyson-Davies of the APCS. 'But it's important to remember that the real losers are the banks and retailers – consumers almost always get their money back.' That's because, in genuine cases of credit card fraud, you're only liable for the first £50 the villains rip you off for – and some finance companies will even cover the whole bill (see comparison panel).

As for the retailers, not only do they have to contend with higher transaction charges – research by the Gartner Group (***www.gartner.com***) suggests that typical online commission is 2.5 per cent, compared to 1.5 per cent for traditional sales – but they're forced to stump up an anti-fraud fee of 30p per transaction. When a crime is discovered, there's often no comeback for the retailer. They lose the entire value of the item which was fraudulently obtained. This costs them millions every year.

Of course, retailers want to quickly authorise payments, and consumers want added security. The obvious solution is to use some other form of payment – and a massive number of solutions are currently under development.

InternetCash (***www.internetcash.com***), for example, employs a card system similar to pay-as-you-go mobile phone vouchers. Bought using cash, credit or debit cards, they have single-use authorisation codes and a PIN number. They're currently only available in dollars and are accepted by a growing number of retailers.

PayPal (***www.x.com***) is the most popular form of payment system for online auctions in the US. Customers credit their account and use it to settle balances on auction purchases, while auction sellers receive guaranteed cleared payments to their accounts. The privacy of users is never compromised: card details do not travel over the Net. If an account holder fails to receive goods from a verified retailer or consumer, PayPal will refund their money. This service is only available to US customers, but PayPal hopes to launch in Europe soon.

But while reputable operations like InternetCash and PayPal keep your credit card details safe behind firewalls – gateways between servers and the Internet, designed to keep out nosy hackers – e-commerce sites lacking firewalls can be vulnerable to attack.

THE HACK-ATTACKERS

Online security expert Ian Vitek of iX Security (***www.iXSecurity.com***) showed us how easy it can be to gain access to remote computer systems. iX tests the integrity of e-commerce Web sites by 'hack-attacking' them. Typically this means interrogating a company's server for lists of user names and encrypted passwords, then running freely available hacker software like 'l0phtcrack' (which attempts to log on using the supplied names matched with ill-chosen passwords, such as the user's own name) until it gets a number of legitimate passwords.

This information is then used to break the remaining undeciphered passwords until, in a matter of days, the company has

PICK OF THE PLASTIC

What's the best card to carry when venturing out into the world of e-commerce?

Some companies go to great expense to market their plastic as fraud-protected 'Internet' cards. However, just about every credit card provider says that if your card is fraudulently used, you'll be covered. Some offer online and offline benefits, such as cashback and it seems that it's never been a better time to transfer a balance.

AMEX BLUE ★★★

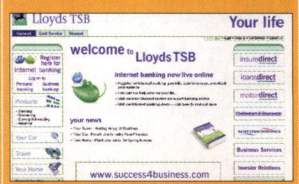
Annual fee £12
Current APR 9.9 percent on balance transfers, fixed until the amount is paid back; rate then reverts to variable APR.
Internet benefits You're covered for all fraudulent online purchases. For every pound you spend, you get 1p back. Special offers for Blue card holders, which included offers on flights and car hire when we visited – see Web site for details.
www.americanexpress.co.uk

EGG CARD ★★★★

Annual fee Free
Current APR 10.9 percent but 2.5 percent on balance transfers.
Internet benefits All fraudulent losses refunded. Currently 2 percent cashback on online transactions at the Egg Shop; one percent on all others.
www.egg.com

BARCLAYCARD ★★★

Annual fee £10
Current APR 7.9 on balance transfers until March 2001
Internet benefits Covered if the card is used fraudulently online. Special offers at some Net stores.
www.barclaycard.co.uk



LLOYDS ASSET ADVANCE ★★★★

Annual fee Free
Current APR 9.9 percent on balance transfers.
Internet benefits Fully covered for online fraud. Allows you to claim back the difference in price (less the first £25) for items you buy – online or offline in the UK – and then find at a lower price elsewhere. ***www.lloydstsb.co.uk***

LYCOS CLASSIC ★★★★

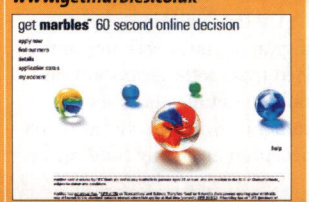
Annual fee Free
Current APR 4.9 percent on balance transfers for five months; then variable APR. 59 days interest-free credit.
Internet benefits Full coverage for online fraud. ***www.halifax.co.uk/affinity/lycos/index.shtml***

CAHOOT ★★★

Monthly fee Variable (see site)
Current APR Three options offered; typical examples on the site range from 5.6 to 7 percent.
Internet benefits Completely covered for online fraud.
www.cahoot.com

MARBLES ★★★★

Annual fee Free
Current APR 4.5 percent for six months on purchases and transfers; then reverts to standard APR.
Internet benefits Fully covered for online fraud. If goods (up to £500) bought online don't arrive, you get your money back.
www.getmarbles.co.uk



YAHOO ★★★★

Annual fee Free
Current APR 3.9 percent on balance transfers fixed for five months; then reverts to variable APR. Interest-free credit for 59 days.
Internet benefits Fully covered for online fraud; one per cent cashback on purchases before 31 May 2001. ***www.halifax.co.uk/affinity/yahoo/index.shtml***

APR TRANSFER RATES CORRECT AT TIME OF GOING TO PRESS

worked out the adminstrator's access details – allowing complete access to the site and everything stored on it, including customers' credit card records. So, even if you and the administrator choose a near-unbreakable password, such as a random selection of letters and numbers, the lazy choices of fellow punters allows the hackers to get in...

'Of the sites that have asked us to test their security, 50 percent have been penetrated, while we found vulnerabilities in a further 30-40 percent,' Ian says. 'We tested one very big e-commerce site in the US and we penetrated *everything*.'

If you find that figure scary, help is at hand. Wave Systems (***www.wavesys.com***) has developed a microchip specifically for e-commerce. The reusable chip is 'charged' using a credit card, then used to pay for online services, such as games, on demand. The system is claimed to be impossible to defraud.

Another solution might be digital signatures (computerised transactions containing unique details about a customer) – which have just been accepted as legally binding contracts. UK Smart (***www.uksmart.co.uk***) is among the first to bring this development to the British consumer. Its Smart Wallet system will hold all personal details of a consumer in secure storage. These are never transmitted. Instead, Smart Wallets are 'charged' with credits, from bank payments or a credit card.

When a transaction is carried out, instead of storing an address and card number on its computer, e-shops will check the available balance on the Smart Wallet. If enough is available, the transaction takes place, with a digital signature left by the consumer. Retailers know the money is guaranteed and consumers get a time- and date-stamped receipt, warranted by the Post Office.

This can bring benefits to every Net user, as UK Smart's Simon Cook explains: 'The Post Office will distribute the software, including a firewall to protect home systems, free to consumers. Because it holds all your personal details, a digital signature simplifies form-filling. Applying for a mortgage or credit card online is currently a marathon effort, but with Smart Wallets it will be done in a second. Even people unable to obtain a credit card can shop online with Smart Wallets.'

Smart Wallets are currently undergoing beta testing, and will be available to consumers by spring 2001 'at the very latest'.

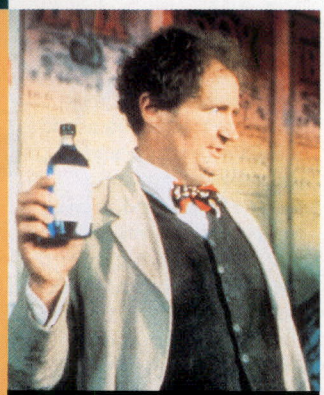
What's certain is that our rush to register for online banking hasn't been slowed by worries about security. Yasmin Choudhury of Barclays Bank says they're processing 20,000 applications for new online accounts per week. 'Security is of paramount importance to us. We have a team of experts, keeping us one step ahead of potential online fraudsters and protecting the integrity of our customers.'

You might not have a team of tame hackers at your command, but use your common sense and you should be fine when shopping online. As they become available, choose a form of secure alternatives to credit cards, or sign up to a guaranteed Net card like Marbles. The Web is a world of fantastic new opportunities – don't let the distant threat of fraud put you off exploring it.

THE SCAMS

3 THE BOGUS WEB SITE

HOW IT WORKS
What appears to be a site offering goods is just a front for a criminal.
REAL-WORLD EQUIVALENT
Sending a cheque to a mail order company that cashes it, but fails to deliver.
YOUR CHANCE OF BEING DONE Low. Look for proof that the company conforms to the Which? 'Web Trader' scheme, for example: (***www.oft.gov.uk/html/shopping***).


'It'll put hairs on a billiard ball, sir'

4 'GET RICH QUICK' SITES

HOW IT WORKS
Companies send emails offering grants, promising to deal with 'administration' for a small charge – to the (sadly gullible) victim's credit card.
REAL-WORLD EQUIVALENT
Pyramid sales, which claim to make participants millionaires if they get their friends to sell water filters.
CHANCE OF BEING DONE
One hundred percent – if you're an idiot!

TIPS FOR HAPPY ONLINE SHOPPING

Shop at a secure site

Make sure the site you're shopping from has a secure server. You can tell whether a site is secure by the appearance of a small padlock in the bottom left hand corner of your browser, or sometimes an unbroken key when you're using Netscape Navigator. The site should also tell you that you are entering a secure server area.

Some sites accept cheques, and you should be able to find out if they do in the customer information/terms and conditions section of the site. Never send credit card or personal details via email because the information won't be encrypted.

Shop at names you know

Shop with brand-name companies where possible. If you want to shop from a lesser-known online store, check who they are by clicking on the 'About Us' or information buttons. You should be able to find a phone number and address for the site; call the number to make sure the shop exists.

Check delivery

Always check delivery times and charges. If the site doesn't make these obvious, you should be able to find them in the customer information area (which you should read anyway). Be vigilant when you are buying from an overseas site. What may seem like a bargain from a US site may not be such a coup once you've added shipping charges. Duty and VAT are added to all imported goods of £18 and over. Some UK residents may find that free delivery does not apply.

'Delivery for Mr Van Gogh'

Use your plastic

As long as you shop from a secure site and follow the guidelines here, it's as safe to use your credit card online as it is to use it over the phone, in a restaurant or in a High Street shop. If your card is misused on the Net, your credit card company won't make you pay for the goods, although you may be liable for the first £50. Providing you haven't been negligent – like 'giving' your card details to a friend – the card issuers' Banking Code will cover you (even if you've used a site without a secure server).

Print the contract

Once you've made an online transaction, the site should give you an on-screen contract – details of what you've bought, cost, etc. This is a permanent record of your purchase, so make sure you keep it.

Know your rights

If it's a UK site, you have the same consumer rights as you do in the High Street – your goods should be suitable and be in a satisfactory condition (remember, you won't be covered by UK law when you shop from an overseas site). If you want further assurance, look for sites displaying the Which? Web Trader logo, which means shops have to adhere to the mighty watchdog's code of practice (find a list of traders and advice at ***www.which.net***,). Another sign to look for is the Interactive Media in Retail Group (IMRG) logo, whose members operate using methods that are 'truthful and fair...' For more details, go to ***www.imrg.org***. Other useful sites include The Advertising Standards Association's site at ***www.asa.org.uk*** and the Office of Fair Trading ***www.oft.gov.uk***.

be free to bid for a bargain

Now you're free to buy and sell online in a fun and easy way. Quite simply, you get the chance to pay the price you want to pay for top brand goods, collectables or bargains. Just search for what's on offer and make your bid. Buying or selling, you're always in control, safe in the knowledge that you're buying through Freeserve, the UK's No.1 for the Internet. Find out more and join us at www.fsauctions.co.uk

fsauctions.co.uk

A GREAT DEAL ONLINE

Visit FSauctions at freeserve www.freeserve.com
Freeserve now offers a choice of low Internet call packages

IS THIS THE FUTURE OF TV?

Cold Feet started as a TV drama, but its Web site, _www.coldfeetonline.co.uk_, has a life of its own. What tricks were used to build this ground-breaking site, and how can you do the same?

GRANADA'S *COLD FEET* IS BY NO MEANS the first TV programme to have a strong presence on the Net – but the show's producers have come up with one of the best TV-based Web sites. Television companies often treat the Net as a kind of worldwide advertising billboard, with the sites for many shows being little more than glorified adverts. There are pictures of the cast accompanied by fawning biographies, and not much else.

Granada, however, saw that the interactive nature of the Internet provided an opportunity to create a Web site that allowed fans of its thirty-something comedy-drama to get more involved. '*Cold Feet* is one of Granada's most popular dramas,' says Katrina Moran, producer of the Web site. 'And the audience is very Internet aware, so we knew there was an angle. And we wanted it to have the feel of the show.'

So, instead of simply slapping a few pictures and potted bios of the cast onto a page, the *Cold Feet* site attempts to bring the atmosphere of the show onto the Net, and to extend the show's appeal by giving its fans new material and behind-the-scenes info.

In fact, it's a whole new type of Web site. 'The writers and producers are quite forward-looking,' Katrina told us during a visit to Granada's studio during the shooting of the latest series. 'They saw this as a way of adding to the programme.'

The pictures and biographies of the cast are all there, of course, but they represent just a fraction of the material on the *Cold Feet* site. Newcomers to the show can bring themselves up-to-date with an episode-by-episode guide to all the previous series.

WORDS: CLIFF JOSEPH

Then there are online CVs for all the main characters, complete with slapped-on Post-it Notes from other characters with bitchy little comments on each other's personalities.

There's also a lot of behind-the-scenes material, including outtakes and video footage shot on location during the latest series. One unusual way of extending the Web site beyond the individual programme episodes is the addition of emails, written by the show's creator Mike Bullen. These are messages sent by the show's characters to each other. If you sign up to the Inbox page on the Web site, you'll receive these emails regularly – and get an extra little fix of *Cold Feet* even when it's not on air.

Then, for really devoted fans, there are games and competitions to enter, as well as freebies such as downloadable screensavers and wallpaper pictures for your PC. The show's producers are also looking into the possibility of setting up an online auction, where you can bid for costumes or props from the series to raise money for charity.

These features are designed to flesh out the show's characters so that the fans feel more involved. Moran is also involved with a number of other projects being devised by Granada's new media division, and feels that the *Cold Feet* approach is an indication of the way the Net is likely to develop in the future. Instead of just broadcasting self-contained weekly episodes, TV programmes are likely to spread out onto the Net, with new material that expands and enhances the TV show to make it a 24-hour operation.

However, the show's producers are adamant that TV will still reign supreme, and that the Internet will never dictate the development of a programme. 'I'm interested in the grass roots reaction that you can get over the Internet,' says executive producer Christine Langan. 'But I will only ever be marginally influenced by it.' So don't think you can get the producers to arrange a threesome involving Rachel, Karen and The Muscular Barman just by sending an email.

You can, however, pick up a few tips on Web design from the *Cold Feet* site. It's more inventive than a lot of sites, but it's not complicated from a technical point of view. In fact, you can even produce something similar for your personal pages.

THE HOME PAGE

It's nice to see that the designers haven't tried to be too clever with *Cold Feet*'s home page. They've kept things nice and simple, with just some basic text and graphics to guide you through to the rest of the site.

The page is divided into two self-contained areas known as 'frames'. The first frame contains the text-links on the left-hand third of the page – 'The Show', 'Cast', and so on. This frame remains constant at all times, and clicking on the links in this frame brings up different bits of content within the second frame, which occupies the rest of the page.

It's easy to design a page like this, and you should be able to get started with any decent HTML editing program (see panel). You can create a simple page with two frames and use it as the template for the entire site. Then you just import pictures using a low-cost scanner or digital camera, and type in some text alongside each one.

The only thing here that requires any work is the fancy typography and the buttons along the left-hand side of the page. That curly-wurly text isn't actually text; it's a hand-drawn custom typeface that has been saved as a series of small graphics files. This allows you to use them as 'rollover buttons' that change appearance when you pass your mouse over them. Then, when you click on them, they bring the relevant bits of content into the right-hand frame.

Rollover buttons are a nice way of adding a professional feel to your Web pages. They look good, and the way that they change appearance makes your pages seem more responsive. The *Cold Feet* Web site makes heavy use of a program called Flash to create rollovers and other animated graphics. Flash is a bit of a beast, though – it's expensive and not particularly easy to use.

There is an easier way to create your own rollovers. If you're happy to design your own graphics, you can use a more straightforward rival to Flash called LiveMotion. This costs about £200, but there's a free demo version available at ***www.adobe.com*** along with demo versions of other Adobe products, which are great for producing Web pages. There are also lots of Web sites that provide libraries of ready-made fonts and graphics that you can download free of charge (see Freebies, p55).

THE GALLERY

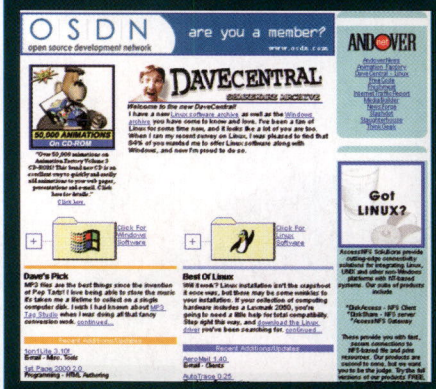
Now here's an example of Flash getting a bit out of control. The designers of the site have used Flash to create fancy animated graphics and rollovers that you use to navigate through the *Cold Feet* picture gallery.The trouble is, the complicated Flash file takes a while to load.

A solution would be to combine the pictures on this page into a single large image, compress it to reduce the download time, then divide it into an 'image map' – a picture that can be divided into different areas, with each acting as a link to another part of the gallery. Most HTML editors have an image-map option built into them, and Microsoft's FrontPage includes a graphics-editing program you can use to compress your photographs. It will even tell you how long each picture will take to download at different modem speeds. If you don't want to pay for extra graphics programs, you could

HOW TO BUILD YOUR FIRST SITE

It's easy to get started with your own site, even if you've never designed a Web page before. Web pages are created using a programming language known as HTML – hypertext mark-up language. However, you don't have to learn programming in order to use HTML – there's a wide range of HTML editing programs available that work just like a conventional wordprocessor or page-layout program. They allow you to type text and place graphics and other types of files straight onto the page, so there's no programming involved.

Probably the best bet for beginners right now is Microsoft's FrontPage 2000, which costs about £100. And if you don't want to spend any money on an HTML editor right away, there are a number of free editors that you can download from sites such as ***www.download.com*** or ***www.davecentral.com***.



'Online chat sessions? They're a bit like going down the pub'
James Nesbitt, 'Adam'

HELEN BAXENDALE

The star of *Cold Feet* is one of the best-known women in the world, thanks to a stint a couple of years ago as the fiancée of David Schwimmer in *Friends*. Helen was supposed to play some sort of a Cock-er-nee lass – which meant that we could only grit our teeth as yet another 'English' accent was mangled by a US sitcom.

It wasn't the happiest experience for Helen, who's thankfully back on our screens this winter in a more comfortable role: as Rachel Bradley in *Cold Feet*. But her days spent in the cast of *Friends* continue to haunt her – in the guise of near-obsessive fans. 'I think it's such a strange thing that someone would want to spend time putting information about somebody else on a computer,' Helen explains. 'That said, I think fan sites are great if they're not concentrating too much on one person – then it gets to be a bit intrusive.'

In fact, there appears to be some lucrative online trading in Helen's image. 'Someone must be selling my face on the Net, because fans always send me the same picture. Every time it's sent to me to autograph, it's always in the same format. Someone's making loads of money out of it.'

Unfortunately, Helen's not the right person to track down the image-thief, as the Net's still a closed book to her. 'I've got two computers in the house but I'm not very good on them. I can't really work the Internet, but I've got to learn because I shouldn't really be out of the whole thing. It scares me a bit. It's just that I'm an actress – I don't have to do anything normal people do. Terrible, isn't it?'

EVER FELT LIKE GETTING CLOSER TO THE MUSIC?

WHAT HI-FI?

the art of great sound

'There's a lot of swearing on the behind-the-scenes footage – can you bleep the Internet?'

John Thomson, 'Pete'

always download PaintShop Pro, which is available on the Net as freeware.

EMAIL & CHAT

One of the more interesting ideas the *Cold Feet* producers have come up with is to write new material in the form of emails sent between the characters. This allows the Web site to go beyond the limits of the self-contained TV episodes, and allows fans to feel even more involved in the show. If you're running a small business, or you simply want to keep people up to date with your life, you can set up a mailing list on your Web site by using free programs such as ListBot. The ZDNet Web-publishing empire also has a good software library called Hotfiles, which has several mailing list programs available for free download.

Your HTML editor will allow you to put a link to an email address on your pages. When people sign up for your mailing list their emails are sent to the mailing list program, which automatically compiles a database of all email addresses. You can then send emails to everyone in the database with the click of a single button.

Another way of getting people involved is to have an online chat room on your Web site. There's a chat forum planned for the *Cold Feet* site, although the producers don't have it up and running just yet. That's not surprising, as there's a lot of programming work involved in that sort of thing. But the Internet can come to your rescue once more, as there a number of ready-made chat modules that have been programmed by other people and distributed free of charge on the Net. Again, ZDNet Hotfiles is a good place to find free software of this type. You could even go one further than the *Cold Feet* site and set up 'visual chat' on your site. Instead of plain text messages, visual chat uses cartoon graphics to represent people on screen, and there are some good, free visual chat programs available, such as The Palace and Virtual Places.

There are also sites that have screensavers and other freebies you can use to tempt people onto your site. There's a site called Absolutely Free Screen Savers – it does exactly what it says it does – which also has a long list of links to other sites that can provide you with fun freebies.

VIDEO

There's some fun behind-the-scenes video clips on the *Cold Feet* site, and there are all sorts of things you could do with video on your own Web site. Channel 4's *Big Brother* is just an extension of the Webcam phenomenon, whereby people can broadcast scenes from their daily lives onto the Net just by using a low-cost camera. You too could do your own version of *Ibiza Uncovered* by taking a camcorder on holiday with you and putting clips of the action on your Web site.

Unfortunately, posting video on the Internet is a hellishly complicated business, and using 'streaming' video – which starts to play as it downloads, so you don't have to wait ages to download the entire file first – can be very expensive as well. However, there are some excellent new products and Internet services that can help you to work

FREEBIES

The producers of *Cold Feet* have got mega media conglomerate Granada to foot the bill for their Web site, but you don't have to spend a fortune to have a smart-looking site of your own. Here are some sites with excellent libraries of free software that will do most of the work for you.

GRAPHICS AND ANIMATION

LiveMotion – *www.adobe.com*
PaintShop Pro – *www.jasc.com*
Download.Com – *www.download.com*
DaveCentral – *www.davecentral.com*

VIDEO SOFTWARE

QuickTime – *www.apple.com/quicktime*
ITools – *www.apple.com/itools*
Pinnacle Systems – *www.pinnaclesys.com*
Lycos – *www.lycos.com*
Logitech – *www.logitech.com*
Spotlife – *www.spotlife.com*

EMAIL AND CHAT

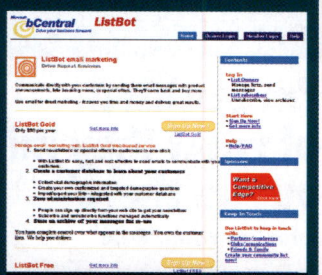
ListBot – *listbot.com*
Hotfiles – *hotfiles.zdnet.com*
The Palace – *www.thepalace.com*
Virtual Places – *www.vplaces.net*

ENTERTAINMENT

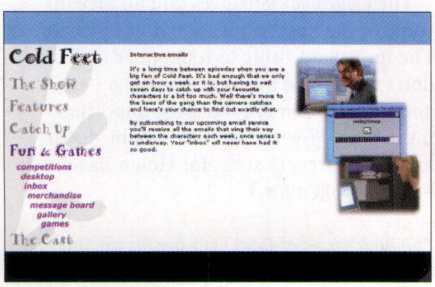
Absolutely Free Screen Savers – *www.free-search.com*

LiveMotion: tons of free graphics

QuickTime: download video for free



ListBot: get your site noticed here



Helen couldn't get enough of James' fabric softener

around these problems, without spending too much money or having to learn tricky programming techniques.

There are stacks of low-cost Webcams that come with software which allow you to put a series of still images onto your Web page. This isn't real 'moving' video of course, but if you set the images to be updated every 30 seconds, you can give people something close to a live show without getting caught up in the technical problems of real video.

If you want to go the whole hog and use slick, edited video clips, then your best bet is to use a 'video-hosting' service. These are Web sites that allow you to upload video clips and store them on the sites' own servers. This is a really good option, as using someone else's server saves you the trouble and expense of setting up your own video server. A professional-quality video server can cost tens of thousands of pounds, so these hosting services are a pretty good deal. We've no idea how most of them plan to make any money, but that's their problem.

Apple was one of the first companies to provide an option like this, and anyone with an Apple Mac or iMac computer can upload video clips to Apple's iTools Web site (as long as you're using version 9.0 of the Mac operating system software). PC-based services are now starting to appear as well. Pinnacle Systems provides a video-hosting service for use with its Studio Online video products, and the Lycos search engine has recently launched a new video-hosting service called VideoCentre.

But the best PC-based service, without a doubt, is Spotlife. The Spotlife Web site not only allows you to upload and store video clips on its video servers; it also allows you to make live, streaming video broadcasts direct from your Webcam. The drawback is that the Spotlife broadcasting software is currently only provided with the QuickCam range of Webcams produced by a company called Logitech. If you haven't already got a Webcam, we can recommend the QuickCam range, as Spotlife really is an excellent service.

There's one other problem with video-hosting services: your video clips are actually located on someone else's Web site. This means that you can't use the video as part of your own site.

If you do want to have your video clips located on your own site, there is one option that isn't too difficult to set up, and which won't cost you an arm and a leg. Apple's QuickTime video software provides an option called 'progressive downloading', which is sort of halfway between true streaming and having to download complete video clips before being able to play them. It's not difficult to use

The *Cold Feet* site might be full of Flash content, but there are simple ways to duplicate its effects

'I'm terrified of what they might put up there'

John Thomson, 'Pete'

and you can download the QuickTime software from Apple's site free of charge, so there's no cost involved.

You can create and edit your video clips then save them in QuickTime format. Next, you simply place the video clip on your Web pages like any other graphic file. When people visit your page the clip will start to play at the same time as it downloads. You can't skip forwards or backwards through clips as you can with streaming video, but it's near enough. Remember, though, that anyone visiting your site will need to have QuickTime installed on their PC in order to view your clips. You'll need to include a link to the Apple site so that they can download QuickTime if they need to. Remember, too, that video files can be large, so you may want to check with your ISP to see how they feel about you putting video on your site.

Dapper John's passport shots were a delight

THE FAMILY TREE

Here's another nice feature that you could adapt for your own Web site. The *Cold Feet* family tree allows you to click on the pictures of each of the main players, then calls up pictures of other characters on the show they're involved with. So if you want to know what's going on between Rachel and The Muscular Barman, this is the place to go.

On your own Web site you could do something similar with your own family/friends/objects-of-unrequited-lust. Duplicating the method on the *Cold Feet* site could be tricky, as the designers have been getting clever with Flash again. But our old friend, the image-map, could work here as well. You could use a picture of your friends, then divide that picture up into an image map, with links attached to each person in the picture. When you click on someone's face, the image map would then take you to another page showing pictures and information about their family and friends.

The *Cold Feet* site gives you an idea of some of the possibilities for your own site. The important thing to remember is that you don't need to be a technical genius – ideas and imagination are the most important ingredients. Everything else can be downloaded for free. (Except for Helen Baxendale – she's spoken for.)

The new series of Cold Feet *begins on Sunday, November 12 on ITV.*

New...

The No.1 Property Search Engine.

Search through 498,674 properties from every major property site with the...

SMART ENGINE!

COMPLETE HOUSE BUYER.CO.UK

www.CompleteHouseBuyer.co.uk

Powered by **SMART ENGINE TECHNOLOGY**

THE 50 GREATEST WEB SITES OF ALL TIME

We debated, we argued, we fought, we sulked...

and somehow we came up with our top 50 Web sites of all time. Sites that not only excel in what they do, but are true online pioneers.

Then, once we'd done that, we contacted some of the people behind those sites to see what they thought would make up their Top Five.

We're now clearing out our email accounts in anticipation of the deluge of messages we're bound to attract, asking why that superb site wasn't in, why such and such a useless site was featured, and so on. All we ask is that if you feel that strongly about any entries, go to our Web site, ***www.thenet now.co.uk***, and cast your vote in the 'Fave Sites' section.

As for what we think are the best the Web has to offer, here goes...

1 IMDB

www.imdb.com

WHAT IS IT? An immense database of all things film

WHY? Because it encapsulates everything we love about the Internet. Not only is it one of the greatest research tools ever, but it's a true product of what makes the Internet great – communication between people around the world about a subject they love. Not only that, but it's completely unique and there's nowhere better for movie addicts. Want to know who the 'best boy' was for *Spring and Port Wine*? Or how many Ewoks there were in *Return of the Jedi*? Or...

HISTORY Film buff Col Needham (pictured) started building the database a decade ago, shared it with other members of a film newsgroup, and an FTP site went up in 1992. Within three years traffic was doubling every fortnight. Amazon.com bought the site in 1998 but left it pretty much alone, except for ubiquitous links to their video store.

TRAFFIC Five million unique users monthly.

WHAT NEXT? The Amazon link-up, the popularity of the subject matter and the easy interface gives the IMDb freedom to grow. If there's a worry, it's that the IMDb might look staid in the whistles-and-bells broadband future of the Internet.

FAVOURITE FIVE

Chosen by Col Needham, Founder of IMDB

1 IMDB
www.imdb.com
No apologies made

2 Google
www.google.com
Search engine

3 Slashdot
www.slashdot.org
News for nerds

4 Yahoo!
www.yahoo.com
Search directory

5 BBC
www.bbc.co.uk
Online home of Auntie

WORDS: PAUL WINSLOW, SUE WEEKES, GARY PARKINSON

50 GREATEST WEB SITES OF ALL TIME

FAVOURITE FIVE

Chosen by Rob Burgess, Chairman of Shockwave

1 Yahoo!
www.yahoo.com
Search directory

2 The Joe Cartoon Co
www.joecartoon.com
Excellent humorous cartoons

3 Shockwave
www.shockwave.com
Enough said

4 CANOE
www.canoe.ca
Portal for Canada

5 Drop the Gloves
www.dropthegloves.com
Game-used ice hockey equipment retailer

2 BBC

www.bbc.co.uk

WHAT? A gargantuan site covering everything Auntie Beeb does and much, much more

WHY? There are lots of immense sites, but the Beeb has pulled out all the stops to match quantity with quality. Not only has it put more or less everything it has online, it's also created bags of content specifically for the Web. As an example, consider the quality of the Radio 1 site alone – and remember that it's just a drop in the ocean.

HISTORY After the cornerstone news service launched in late 1997, bbc.co.uk usage doubled every four months. Content generation continued apace, and marketing offshoot beeb.com was launched to earn the BBC a few bob.

TRAFFIC 190 million page impressions monthly.

WHAT NEXT? It might be a struggle to continue the amazing content expansion, so should Auntie Beeb concentrate on a few core sites?

3 Amazon

www.amazon.com

WHAT? Leading online retailer

WHY? Because they picked up on the idea of e-commerce. Although they don't seem to have made any money out of it yet, Amazon has been the role model adopted by the majority of other sites selling online. Not only that, its products are cheaper than on the High Street and there's plenty of related content to go with it.

HISTORY The Amazon bookshop opened back in July 1995 and other easily-postables like CDs, DVDs, and videos followed smoothly on, as did British, French and German sites.

TRAFFIC They won't say, but they do have 23 million customers.

WHAT NEXT? Strategic agreements with the likes of Toys 'R' Us bring Amazon ever closer to traditional bricks-and-mortar retailing – maybe a necessary move if the figures are ever going to climb out of the red.

4 Google

www.google.com

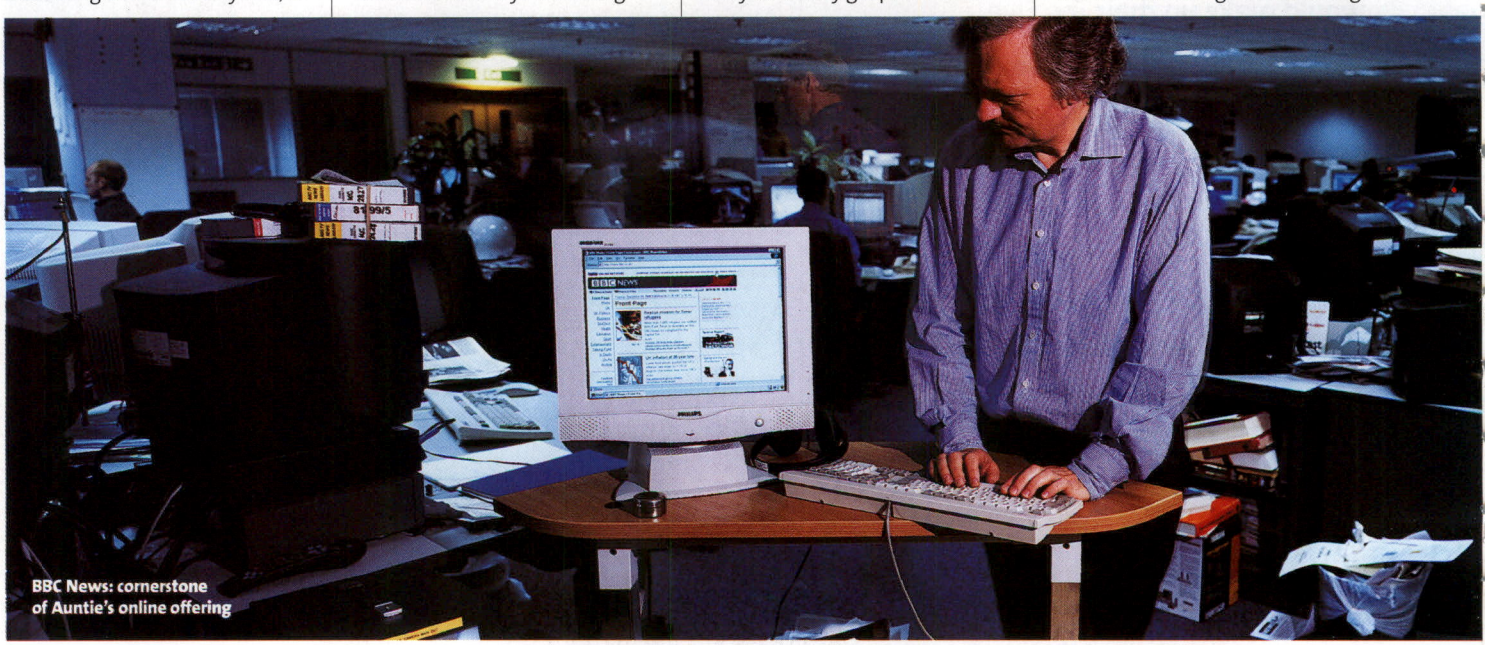
WHAT? Search engine

WHY? Because it's a search engine that really works. You know, one where you put in a search term and you actually get pointed in a direction that's relevant. It's what the world has waited for with every other search engine – and now we've got it. Thank you, Google.

HISTORY Yet another Californian surfing aid, Google made a splash on its inception in 1998 and was soon on the crest of a wave, leaving AltaVista and co in its wake.

TRAFFIC 20 million searches per day – 50 million including partner sites.

WHAT NEXT? Google is now selling



BBC News: cornerstone of Auntie's online offering

its back end (stop sniggering) to any Webmaster that wants the world's greatest search engine on their site.

5 GeoCities

www.geocities.com

WHAT? A publishing community offering free Web site hosting

WHY? If the Net is all about getting communities together and offering everyone the opportunity to publish to the world, then GeoCities deserves a big pat on the back. Ignoring the annoying pop-up adverts (or trying to), it's provided an ideal starting point for turning Joe Public into budding Webmasters.

HISTORY Launched in 1994 and bought by Yahoo! in 1999. Has authored and hosted around 3.5 million sites (OK, some of them are dreadful, but that's not the point). In its heyday, was one of the top five most visited sites in the world.

TRAFFIC 3.5 million-plus sites hosted, serving 19 million users.

WHAT NEXT? GeoCities fulfilled an important role in getting the world's wife wise to Webmastery, but the service is now offered by several sites – and not all of them force those damn pop-ups on users and readers. May increasingly become just another part of Yahoo!.

6 Yahoo!

www.yahoo.com

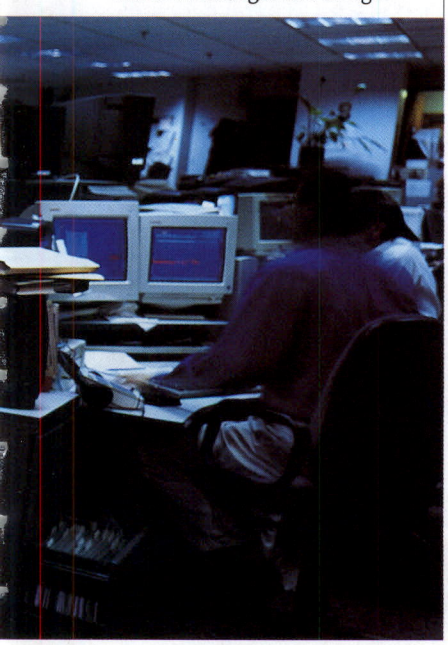
WHAT? Search directory and content provider

WHY? What began as a college project has evolved into one of the most successful sites on the Web. It offers a massive range of services and search facilities, which users can personalise via MyYahoo.

HISTORY? In April 1994, Yahoo! founders Jerry Yang and David Filo starting indexing Web sites to keep track of their personal interests on the Internet. Later that year they turned it into a customised database. That significantly larger database now sits on tens of thousands of computers, and Yahoo! has a site presence for 21 countries.

TRAFFIC Global Yahoo!: 166 million unique users in September 2000; Yahoo! UK and Ireland: 349 million-plus page views in September 2000.

WHAT NEXT? Personalisation is key to future Web development, so expect Yahoo! to continue to be up there. People need a suite of services in one place and Yahoo! delivers this.



7 Shockwave

www.shockwave.com

WHAT? Revolutionary software plug-in used for animation, games, dancing type... you name it

WHAT? It brought interactivity to the Web and became the catalyst for some excellent content. It's also given us one of the Net's best time-wasting activities: gameplay at the desktop.

HISTORY? Shockwave was an application developed by Macromedia in 1994 to enable designers to create animations and add interactivity to sites. Of course, users needed it, too, so it was made freely available. The site began as a showcase for work and, by summer 1999, had taken off as an attraction in its own right.

TRAFFIC 26 million registered users, with 76,000 more signing up daily.

WHAT NEXT? Shockwave will continue to give people 'better Web experiences', says chairman Rob Burgess. Also, check out the just-launched and addictive new game, BLix, (offering a 'rave-aesthetic'). And don't miss David Lynch's show *Dumbland*, coming down the pipeline soon.

8 Motley Fool UK

www.fool.co.uk

WHAT? Financial advice site

WHY? The Net has revolutionised the way many people deal with their finances. Motley Fool began as a newsletter and is now a one-stop shop for financial needs – and it's funny.

HISTORY It's actually a spin-off of the US site of the same name (***www.fool.com***), started in 1994 by David Gardner. In 1996 it launched a UK version, now run by David Berger, a former doctor from Devon, and managing editor Bruce Jackson, who were both discovered via the Fool's own messageboards.

TRAFFIC 225,000 visitors a month; 150,000 registered users; 2,000 posts a day; 13m page impressions a month.

WHAT NEXT? Launching in Germany and Japan; a range of Foolish books can be found in a bookstore near you now; and last summer it launched an interactive course via email.

FAVOURITE FIVE

Chosen by David Berger, head of Motley Fool UK

1 FT.com
www.ft.com
The FT online

2 British Medical Journal
www.bmj.com
The BMJ – online

3 BBC
www.bbc.co.uk
Auntie Beeb's back again

4 Trainline
www.thetrainline.com
Buy your train tickets over the Web

5 Google
www.google.com
Search engine

Chosen by Bruce Jackson Managing Editor of Motley Fool UK

1 Launch.com
www.launch.com
Discover new music online

2 BBC
www.bbc.co.uk
She's back

3 Cricinfo
www.cricinfo.com
Cricket portal

4 Yahoo!
www.yahoo.co.uk
Search central

5 Google
www.google.com
Search engine

9 Hotmail

www.hotmail.com

WHAT? The biggest Web-based email service

WHY? Web-based email offers people the opportunity to have an email address for life. Most Net users have one and, although it may have more to do with branding than model, Hotmail is the biggest: with 67 million users in four years, it's even got it in the *Guinness Book of Records*.

HISTORY Launched in 1996 by Sabeer Bhatia and Jack Smith. A venture capital company praised their idea but wondered how they would attract new members to build a company around it. Microsoft acquired it 18 months afterwards.

TRAFFIC Currently has 70 million active members.

WHAT NEXT? Continued integration with other Microsoft products, such as Messenger Service and Outlook Express.

10 Upmystreet

www.upmystreet.com

WHAT? Local information provider – everything from demographics to decorators

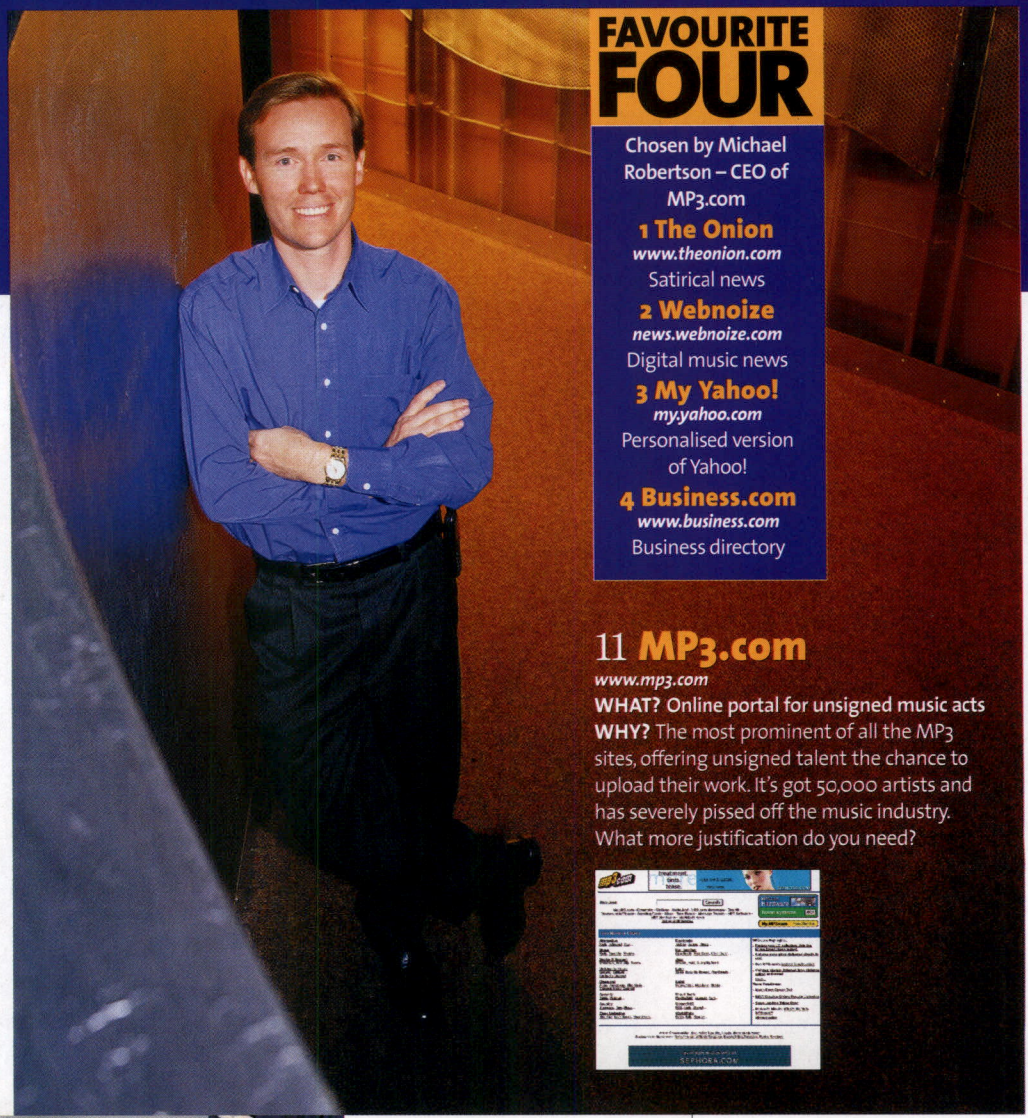
WHAT? Imagine you're about to move house and you want to find out about a new area: house prices, crime rates and more. Find it all in one place – here. It also has an excellent Find My Nearest... section.

HISTORY Founded by Ian Charles Stewart and set up in a six-week period in 1998. Joint founder of FT.com, Tony Blin-Stoyle, joined in summer 1999 to turn it into a commercial venture.

TRAFFIC 250,000 unique users per month.

WHAT NEXT? Now on the interactive television service, Open. It has become the biggest community channel in Europe, extending its range of services via alliances with sites such as Asserta (property) and Job Channel (jobs). Its aim is to 'give the sense of community membership back to modern living'.

50 GREATEST WEB SITES OF ALL TIME



FAVOURITE FOUR

Chosen by Michael Robertson – CEO of MP3.com

1 The Onion
www.theonion.com
Satirical news

2 Webnoize
news.webnoize.com
Digital music news

3 My Yahoo!
my.yahoo.com
Personalised version of Yahoo!

4 Business.com
www.business.com
Business directory

11 MP3.com

www.mp3.com

WHAT? Online portal for unsigned music acts

WHY? The most prominent of all the MP3 sites, offering unsigned talent the chance to upload their work. It's got 50,000 artists and has severely pissed off the music industry. What more justification do you need?

12 Real Networks

www.real.com

WHAT? Creators of video and audio streaming software

WHY? We need more speed and better technology before we can really appreciate streaming video over the Net. However, there's no point having the speed if you haven't got a great piece of software to watch footage. Take a bow, Real Networks!

13 QXL/Ebay

www.qxl.com; www.ebay.com

WHAT? Online auction houses

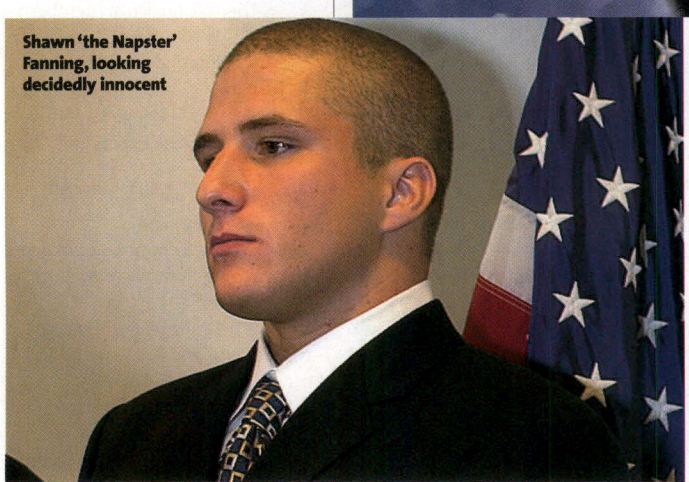
WHY? We couldn't really choose one ahead of the other, but these two companies have brought auctions to the masses. Whether selling or buying, it's now easy.

14 Easyjet

www.easyjet.co.uk

WHAT? Budget airline

WHY? For many Net users, ticket-less travel is becoming the norm rather than the exception, and cheap flights to European destinations are ten-a-penny. The concept might not be hugely original, but it was Easyjet that first picked up the ball and ran with it.



Shawn 'the Napster' Fanning, looking decidedly innocent

15 Napster

www.napster.com

WHAT? Online music file-sharing software

WHY? Whether it will still be in existence by the time you read this is for the courts to decide, but Napster allows you to swap songs with 20 million other users. If the music industry is slightly miffed by MP3.com, it is absolutely fuming about Napster – but users love it. (Read more in Web Icons, p28.)

16 Deja.com

www.deja.com

WHAT? Newsgroup search facility

WHY? Before the Web became as popular as it is, newsgroups were the place where you found the information you wanted. They are full of people who can answer almost any question you care to ask on a topic. Deja.com, formerly Deja News, helped you find the answers quickly in the days before the Web took over.

17 NASA

www.nasa.gov

WHAT? A galaxy of out-of-this-world information

WHY? If only all government departments were this good at putting their work online. NASA bring you the stuff you just cannot get anywhere else, and they do it superlatively. Getting round the site is akin to space exploration: it's so vast that you'll probably never discover everything out there.

18 Guardian Unlimited

www.guardianunlimited.co.uk

WHAT? The online presence of *The Guardian* newspaper

WHY? Because they took a newspaper and created a Web site that wasn't purely a bastardisation of the physical product. Slightly irreverent and with several fantastic channels, Guardian Unlimited is an example of improving your brand online.

19 Moreover.com

www.moreover.com

WHAT? A huge, customisable collection of news feeds

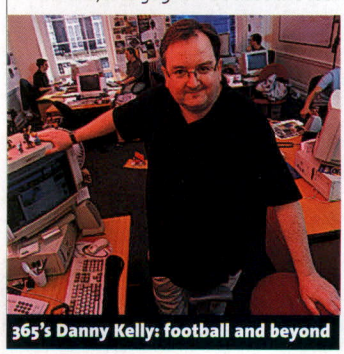
WHY? The Web now has enough news sites to fill the *Encyclopedia Britannica* every day. Moreover brings 1500 news feeds together, so you can get the facts from the best sources without requiring a 'favourites' file the size of a library.

20 365 Corp

www.365corp.com

WHAT? A range of themed Web sites offering an original take on various topics

WHY? The company's first offering, Football365, is the best football site on the Web, and completely original in its approach. Since then 365 has built the brand, produced excellent material – and been successful. Not many have done that without exclusively aiming for niche markets, and 365 will outlast the lot.



365's Danny Kelly: football and beyond

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FAVOURITE FIVE

Chosen by Andrew Hawken – Programming Manager MSN (see p67)

1 **MSNBC**
www.msnbc.com News site run by MSN and NBC

2 **Sporting Life**
www.sporting-life.com For the sports enthusiast

3 **Amazon**
www.amazon.co.uk E-tailer extraordinaire

4 **NY Times**
www.nytimes.com *The New York Times* on the Web

5 **Guardian Unlimited**
www.guardian.co.uk *The Guardian* online

FAVOURITE FIVE

Chosen by Steven Blackburn – Online Marketing Director at Gameplay

1 **Eyestorm**
www.eyestorm.com
Contemporary art and photography site

3 **Google**
www.google.com
Everyone's favourite

3 **Ted Baker**
www.tedbaker.co.uk
Excellent site for the designer-clothes man

4 **UK Resistance**
www.ukresistance.com
Cynical stories about games consoles

5 **Ferret Warez**
www.ferretwarez.com
Where the stars are someone's ferrets

50 GREATEST WEB SITES OF ALL TIME

Gameplay's Steven Blackburn: gaming for the masses

21 Ministry of Sound

www.ministryofsound.co.uk

WHAT? Dance music portal

WHY? Ministry of Sound was always more than just a nightclub, and now its site has evolved into the number-one destination for dance music. Perpetually evolving, it's another example of becoming the best of its kind on the Web by having the vision to see the possibilities.

22 Tucows

www.tucows.com

WHAT? Shareware site

WHY? The Internet offers instant access to a load of free or cheap software, but how do find what you want? Tucows stores and rates software, and has enough mirror sites to minimise the time you have to wait to download it.

23 Egg

www.egg.com

WHAT? Online financial services

WHY? Everyone knew it was only a matter of time before we could have a Web-based bank account and organise our insurance and all sorts of other financial considerations online. But the Prudential's Egg was the first one to stick its nose above the parapet and prove it.

24 Blair Witch Project

www.blairwitch.com

WHAT? Official film site

WHY? If you've just shot a movie that cost just a few thousand bucks, the chances are you won't have much of a marketing budget. So, in a *War of the Worlds*-type way, you harness the power of the Internet to generate worldwide hype about the story – and become a Net-driven multi-million pound success.

25 Olympics

www.olympics.com

WHAT? The official site of the 2000 Olympics

WHY? Admittedly we may have been affected by timing, but the site was fantastic, it attracted an outrageous number of visitors and it never crashed – proving the point that when a Web site is done really well it can satisfy huge demands, and be extremely popular and successful.

26 Gameplay

www.gameplay.com

WHAT? The home of online gaming

WHY? Whether it interests you or not, online gaming is huge. Gameplay offers the content, the games and, more importantly, the service, whether you want to beat people up or race against them online. Gameplay brought online gaming to the masses, and continue to lead the way.

27 Lonely Planet

www.lonelyplanet.com

WHAT? The Web home of the travellers' bible

WHY? Another fine example of transferring a product from the 'real' world and adding value to it via the Net. *Lonely Planet* guides are a godsend for travellers but there is always the danger of them being dated – not a problem with the site.

28 Ebookers

www.ebookers.com

WHAT? One-stop holiday shop

WHY? Its thunder might have been stolen by Lastminute.com, but Ebookers continues to beats off stiff competition from similar sites which find you flights, holiday and hotels. It makes easy work of navigating what could be a complicated procedure.

29 Streetmap

www.streetmap.co.uk

WHAT? Web-based road atlas

WHY? Because, whenever we want to go somewhere new, we simply type in the road name and it all becomes a lot easier to find. Services like Multimap might be nipping at their heels, but Streetmap has been around a long time – and it does exactly what it says on the tin.

30 Electronic Telegraph

www.telegraph.co.uk

WHAT? Web version of the broadsheet newspaper

WHY? *The Telegraph* was the first British newspaper to grasp the nettle and put all its material online, simultaneously creating a searchable archive to go with it. The *Telegraph* Web site might not have the easiest interface, but it can truly be regarded as a pioneer of the Internet.

Lonely Planet chief Tony Wheeler: never out-of-date

50 GREATEST WEB SITES OF ALL TIME

Brent's pamphlets protected him from the swarm of glow-worms

FAVOURITE FIVE

Chosen by Brent Hoberman – Co-founder, Lastminute.com

1 Moreover.com
www.moreover.com
1500 news feeds on one site

2 Deja.com
www.deja.com
For searching news-group postings

3 About.com
www.about.com
News, links and more on every subject imaginable

4 togglethis
www.togglethis.com
Online media solutions company

5 FT.com
www.ft.com
The *Financial Times* again!

31 Lastminute.com

www.lastminute.com

WHAT? Online bucket shop offering last-minute holiday deals and more

WHY? It's a great idea and whether you love the service or not, it was the one that caught the imagination of the British media and became the acceptable face of e-commerce. The public needed convincing about buying online and, although the amount of coverage became tiresome, it was needed.

32 Match.com

www.match.com

WHAT? Dating agency

WHY? Simply because it's the best dating agency we've seen on the Web. Everyone knows the Net is good at fostering relationships anyway, but if you want to join a matchmaking company and don't want to be seen entering its offices, this lot allow you to do it all online.

33 Ain't It Cool News

www.aint-it-cool-news.com

WHAT? Previews and behind-the-scenes movie information

WHY? It's something that just wouldn't happen if it wasn't for the Internet. Ain't It Cool... specialises in finding out what's going on on movie sets, collating preview information from different contributors and letting the world know. How would that happen any other way?

34 Jennicam

www.jennicam.org

WHAT? Live Webcams around the house of an American girl

WHY? Long before Nasty Nick and his glory-hunting *Big Brother* brethren made voyeurism into a mass medium, Jenni was already on the case. Several years ago she put Webcams around her house and showed absolutely everything that went on within those walls. Good work, girl!

CricInfo: in at 37

35 Beenz

www.beenz.com

WHAT? Virtual currency

WHY? You can collect Beenz by visiting certain Web sites and you redeem them online against a variety of purchases. It's a reward scheme writ large and you don't even have to worry about counting vouchers – because it's all virtual. It's the Internet's very own currency.

36 CNET

www.cnet.com

WHAT? A huge source for computers and technology

WHY? If you are accessing the Internet, there's a very big chance you have a computer. CNET offers a huge range of computer-related content, whether you want software reviews, up-to-the-minute news, downloads or advice. And it does it all much bigger and better than anyone else.

'Look – planes'

PICTURES: STEVE ORINO, JIM COLLEY

FAVOURITE FIVE

Chosen by Charles Cohen – Chairman, CEO and founder of Beenz

1 **MAME.net** *www.mame.net* Arcade emulator software
2 **Google** *www.google.com* The search engine strikes again!
3 **Webwaste** *www.webwaste.com* The best waste of time there is
4 **Buffy.com** *www.buffy.com* The vampire slayer's online presence
5 **Victoria's Secret** *www.victoriassecret.com* At least he admits it!

50 GREATEST WEB SITES OF ALL TIME

37 CricInfo

www.cricinfo.com

WHAT? The ultimate cricket site

WHY? It's another example of how one site has made a particular topic its own, and how you can spend hours on a site without ever fully stretching its limits. In its own words, 'You can't be authoritative unless you're covering Hampshire Schools and Bangladesh first-class cricket.'

38 Sportal

www.sportal.com

WHAT? A generic sports site creating separate content for different countries

WHY? It's a classic example of how to utilise the global nature of the Web. Sportal has created excellent sites for specific countries, but uses a slice of cross-fertilisation to enhance each one by offering interviews from one site across the board. Oh, and the content is top-notch as well.

39 About.com

www.about.com

WHAT? 'The Human Internet'

WHY? It uses normal people to create its guides. It builds an environment for almost every topic under the sun and includes content, links, how-to sections, forums, and answers to questions. The ultimate jack-of-all-trades.

40 The Onion

www.theonion.com

WHAT? American satire

WHY? It's a direct translation from paper-based product to online content, which should really discount it from inclusion here. However, it remains the funniest thing on the Web and the ultimate destination when you've got 10 minutes spare and are in need of a laugh.

41 NME.com

www.nme.com

WHAT? Web version of long-running music mag

WHY? To be fair, it probably deserves a higher position, especially when you see its relaunch – which is truly excellent in every way. Again, NME is a great example of recognising the potential of the Net, developing appropriate material and using all its capabilities.

42 Sporting Life

www.sportinglife.com

WHAT? The online regeneration of the paper product

WHY? Where *Sporting Life* was always synonymous with horse racing, the Web site of the same name covers all sport and offers truly in-depth coverage with phenomenal insight and masses of stats. It even pays for itself via its online betting site.

43 Q Online

www.qonline.co.uk

WHAT? Erm, *Q* magazine – online

WHY? Again it's a translation, but where else can you get instant access to a database of over 18,000 reviews at your fingertips? It's not as praiseworthy as IMDB because it's simply a case of using what they already have, but it's still a phenomenal resource.

44 Streets online

www.streetsonline.co.uk

WHAT? CD, DVD, book and games shop

WHY? A sensible approach to e-commerce – whatever next? You may not have heard of Streets Online as it hasn't spent a fortune on marketing and advertising, but, largely by word-of-mouth, it has become the most popular e-commerce site in the UK.

45 Loquax

www.loquax.com

WHAT? Competition portal

WHY? Not tremendously exciting if you aren't a competitions nut, but if you are, then there's one place to start – and this is it! A very well-executed example of researching the Web so comprehensively that scrotes like you and I don't have to.

46 Guinness

www.guinness.com

What? Commercial site for the Irish nectar

Why? Guinness is another company that should be congratulated for being among the first to recognise the potential and importance of the Internet. We don't usually like corporate sites, but this is excellent – and has been for several years.

FAVOURITE FIVE

Chosen by Anthony Thornton – Editor, NME

1 **TV Go Home** *www.tvgohome.com* Vicious, nasty and surreal humour
2 **Egroups.com** *www.egroups.com* Talk to like-minded people around the globe
3 **Google.com** *www.google.com* The search engine that works strikes again!
4 **Jeepster** *www.jeepster.co.uk* The record company that embraced the Web
5 **Ebay** *www.ebay.com* Bid for rare posters and music

47 CNN

www.cnn.com

WHAT? News hub

WHY? It might be American, so not of much interest to Brits, but CNN was the first news network to really take on the Net in a big way, and were in many ways the model for everyone else that followed. We like pioneers – this is one of them.

48 MSN

www.msn.com

WHAT? Portal

WHY? According to Mediametrix, MSN receives over 10 million unique users in the UK alone. Once in direct competition with AOL as an online service provider (a company providing online content only available to members), it now puts it all on the Web for punters everywhere.

49 TV Cream

www.tv.cream.org

What? A site celebrating the best in television

Why? Because it proves the point that although the Internet isn't yet a fantastic medium for watching moving pictures (we still need a telly to do that), it does give you the ability to relive it in a way that the gogglebox doesn't – unless, of course, it just happens to show a rerun of your fave show when you're in front of it.

50 Scoot

www.scoot.com

WHAT? Business directory

WHY? We're not completely convinced about business directories, but a quick straw poll revealed this one is more popular than Yell and ThomWeb. It's much less hassle than picking up a huge great book and leafing through a million pages to find one phone number.

Wembley souvenir £35

A handsome momento from that most famous of stadiums. Wembley may be gone, but with this fine item – crafted from the rubble of the stadium – it will never be forgotten. P&p is £1, and delivery takes about seven days. Check out the full range of souvenirs at ***www.excel-promotions.com***

Bread-maker £89

Celebrate 'Bread Day' on 17 November and become an icon of domesticity by baking your own loaf, with the help of this handy little kitchen helper. Purchase it online at ***www.cucinadirect.co.uk***; delivery costs £4 and takes seven days.

RETAIL THERAPY

If it's too cold to go out, stay at home with a DVD, teddy bear, or just bake some bread

Gyrociser £10

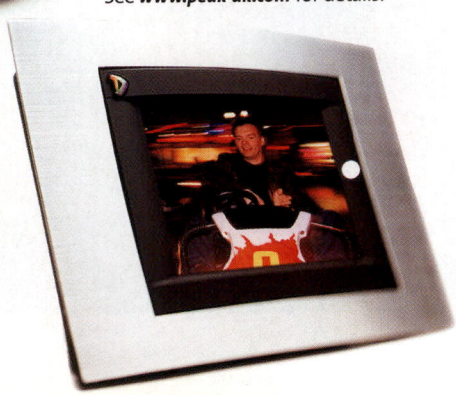
This little gizmo is designed to build up strength in your wrists after a sporting injury. Purchase one from ***www.physiosupplies.com*** (delivery takes seven days) and play with something different for a change.

Teddy bear £50

This little cutie is by Steiff, the makers of the very first teddies nearly 100 years ago – although the price is very much up-to-date. Order from ***www.etoys.co.uk***; p&p is £2.50; delivery takes three to four days.

Digi-Frame £500

Photo albums aren't much cop at displaying digital snaps. What you need is the Digi-Frame, with its 14cm-wide LCD viewing area and three interchangeable surrounds. It displays JPEG images held on memory cards. See ***www.peak-uk.com*** for details.



Hat & shoes £30/£49

Take a step back in time and get yourself some authentic 60s gear (items are cut from original patterns) from the online arm of this Carnaby Street store. Delivery will take about four days (depending on availability); p&p is around £3. ***www.merc-clothing.com***

Wrestling arena £32.97

Regress to your childhood with these Action Man-like figures (prices vary). You too can imagine you're on the WWF stage! This one's selling point is that music booms out and lights flash. Fancy that. Delivery takes three days and costs £2.50, from ***www.toysrus.co.uk***

Clock $34

Jazz up your kitchen (or indeed anywhere else) with this acrylic Big Cheese clock. Inspired by a slice of, er, Swiss cheese, New York-based designers Benza have a further selection of equally eclectic timepieces, plus vases and mouse mats. Check them out at ***www.benzadesign.com*** – goods take around a week to arrive and p&p varies.

DVD £20.99

Aimed at (big) kids everywhere, *Tarzan* is among Disney's best. We got ours from ***www.amazon.co.uk***, with delivery costing £1.74 and arriving within three days.

Sony DVP-FX1 £1100

...and, because we're so thoughtful, we've even sourced a great portable DVD player on which to view *Tarzan* (or, indeed, any flick). This rather sexy machine with its LCD screen can be ordered online from ***www.hutchisons.co.uk***. Delivery is free, and items should be with you within 48 hours.

THE NET'S TOP TIPS FOR ONLINE SHOPPING

■ **CHECK THE SITE IS SECURE** Always shop at a site which has a secure server. This means credit card and personal details sent will be encrypted. Secure sites are indicated by the appearance of a small locked padlock in the bottom left of your browser or sometimes an unbroken key. Never send credit card or personal details across email.

■ **SHOP WITH BRAND-NAME COMPANIES** As with shopping in general, you're better off with a company you've actually heard of. Membership of the Which? Web Trader scheme or the Interactive Media in Retail Group (IMRG) provides further reassurance.

■ **CHECK DELIVERY TIMES AND CHARGES** Check these before you buy – if they're not obvious, go to the customer information or terms and conditions area of the site.

■ **PRINT THE CONTRACT** This is the only permanent record of your purchase, so print it out with your order number. If it's a UK site, you have the same rights as you do in the High Street.

■ **CREDIT CARDS** As long as you follow these guidelines, it should be as safe using your card on the Net as it is in a shop or over the phone. You shouldn't have to pay for goods fraudulently bought with your card although you may be liable for the first £50. For more details, go to ***www.bankingcode.org.uk***

■ *Also see our fraud special this month on pages 44-48*

PHOTOGRAPHY: NICK WRIGHT

The Ultimate Guide to shopping on the net

£100 worth of shopping vouchers! FREE! when you join LineOne†

If you like shopping but hate the hassle, LineOne is the easy, safe and fun alternative. With over 1000 stores plus fantastic bargains and member discounts, you can be sure of getting the most from your online shopping experience with LineOne.

Compare prices in a matter of seconds with our new **checkaprice service**

Exchange unwanted goods for new in the **Swap Shop Forum**

Can't find that special gift? Just ask LineOne's **Personal Shopper** for the answers to all your shopping questions

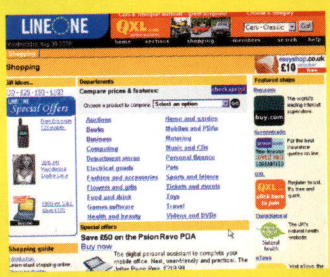
Fantastic bargains and exclusive member discounts

Make sure you get the presents you want this year with our **Christmas Wish List**

Countdown to Christmas with an offer a day in our **LineOne Advent Calendar**

Travel - Discounts for over a million flights, hotels and holidays

LineOne Shopping Charter – ensures an additional level of excellence in online customer service



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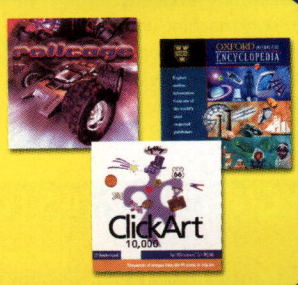

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What Website?

THE BEST OF THE WEB REVIEWED EACH MONTH

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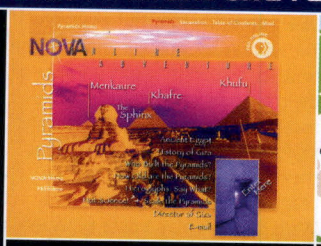
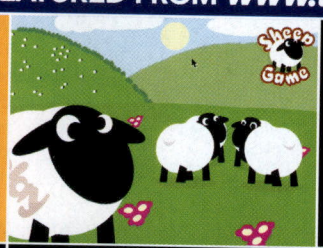


p92 HISTORY Hot 'n' sandy Egypt



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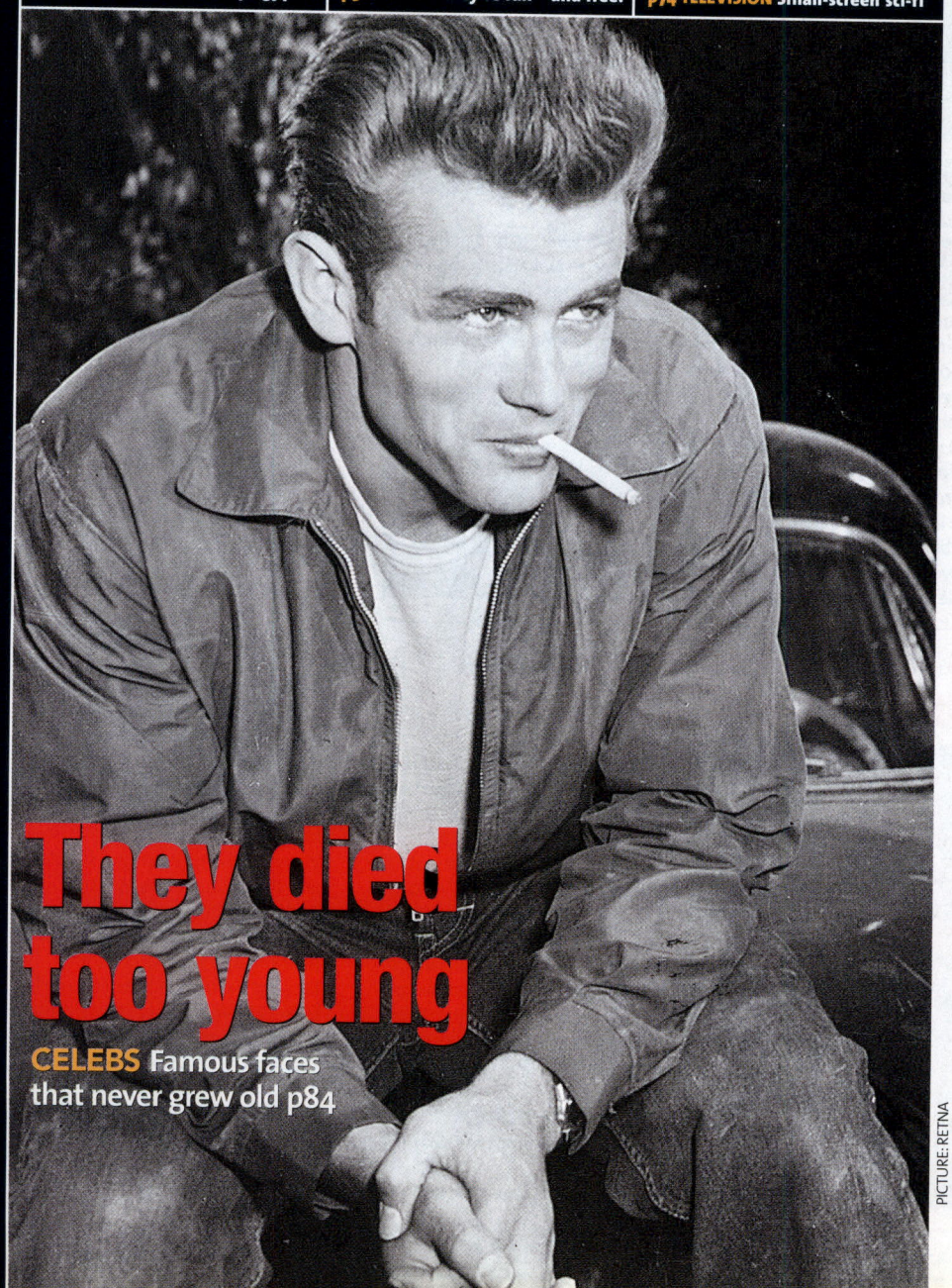
p74 TELEVISION Small-screen sci-fi



They died too young

CELEBS Famous faces that never grew old p84

PICTURE: RETNA

DECEMBER 2000

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NEW ROMANTICS

No, honestly, you look great

Dig out your shoulderpads, scarves and frilly shirts – the 80s are back

Chris Strange Presents Visage & Steve Strange

members.tripod.de/ChrisStrange/entervis.htm ★★★

It's entirely possible that, without Visage members Steve Strange and Rusty Egan, the New Romantic movement would never have happened. At the very least, the journos who deftly slapped the label on the emerging ponces at Strange and Egan's club, Blitz, in the late 70s wouldn't have had such an easy time locating the birth of the new 'scene'. Chris Strange's site, much like Visage (it is French for 'face', after all), is more concerned with images than anything else. But what striking images they are...

Extreme Voice: Ultravox Official Web Site

www.ultravox.org.uk ★★★★

Before he and Sir Bob raised about five days' worth of African debt with *Do They Know It's Christmas?*, Midge Ure was crooning about all-together more ethereal motifs with failed-punks-turned-romantics Ultravox. Ure was already familiar with all things Romo thanks to a spell working with Steve Strange. The 'Vox didn't stand the test of time, but all things related can be found at this everything-but-the-kitchen-sink site.

Spandau Ballet Unofficial Home Page

www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/Palladium/7994 ★★★★

The New Romantic scene was a bit of an incestuous affair, it seems – what with Midge Ure finding his musical foothold with Visage before moving on to Ultravox and then to Spandau Ballet, who owe their very existence to Strange's Blitz club. The Spands formed around 1979 to give a Top 40 face to an ever-growing movement of men with floppy fringes, but it was soulful ballads like *True* that put them in the spotlight. This site has more info than any respectable member of society could hope for.

A good idea at the time

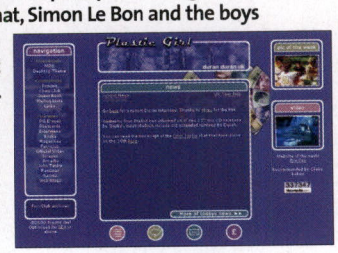
THE NET'S FAVOURITE

Plastic Girl: Duran Duran UK

www.plasticgirl.co.uk ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

We love the name of this, and were relieved to find at least one site that still hankers for the golden New Romo days of Duran Duran. (Too many sites focus on their recent work – who cares?) DD may be the best, and certainly the most successful, example of that move away from grungy punk to pink, powdered glamour in the early 80s. But above and beyond that, Simon Le Bon and the boys delivered perfect pop tunes to the screaming masses of Duranies that lapped up their every fringe-swing. This site allows you to send DD postcards to fellow sufferers, take part in live chats with members of the band, play games and do whatever else your hairsprayed head desires.



The New Romantic scene was a bit of an incestuous affair

Japan Assemblage

freespace.virgin.net/japan.assemblage ★★★

Hardcore loners Japan probably had more influence on the New Romantics than any other band at that time (while popular idols David Bowie and Roxy Music provided an all-important aspect of glamour, Japan added a touch of class). Duran Duran certainly wouldn't have applied their high collars and dusted cheeks with as much grace if it weren't for David Sylvian and chums. The haunting tunes, internal disharmony and chiselled beauty are wrapped up perfectly at this handsome site.

Hysteria: The Unofficial Human League Web Site

www.ozemail.com.au/~jjva/humans.htm ★★★★

The Human League, like many of the New Romo bands, began because of the members' love of electronic music – most notably German band Kraftwerk. Thankfully, the fact that the original two members of the League, Craig Marsh and Martyn Ware, couldn't play a note between them mattered little in a scene obsessed with style. And the addition of pouty dancer-cum-keyboardists Joanne Catherall and Susanne Sulley only made the band more enviably fashionable. Similarly, you might expect to see this site on a catwalk in Milan.

Ant Lib Online

www.adamandtheants.org ★★★★

'I'm the dandy highwayman who you're too scared to mention/ I spend my cash on looking flash and grabbing your attention'. God bless Adam and his Ants – if ever a pop group took the New Romantic ethos to heart, it was them. And the band's in-yer-face costumed antics are still paying off, if this site is anything to go by. The Ant Liberation Front endeavours to 'promote Adam, the Ants, Antpeople and music fandom in general' – and they're still going strong. Log on if you share their passion.

I Want Candy – A Bow Wow Wow Homepage

www.ao.net/~kodai/conroy/bowwowwo.html ★★

More New Wave than New Romantic, the core members of bubblegum/glam supergroup Bow Wow Wow once belonged to Adam and the Ants... before Malcolm McLaren got hold of them. Malcy kept the Captain Ahab frills but lost the bondage gear. After adding teenage Burmese singer Annabella Lwin, Bow Wow Wow's success was short but sweet, with *I Want Candy* topping charts around the world. Their inclusion here is largely thanks to the swish stylings of one Ms Vivienne Westwood, who proved that, with enough rouge, anyone could be Romantic.

Ooh – *smouldering*

AND THEN THERE'S...

Looking the part

If there's one thing that marked the New Romantics out from devotees of other musical movements– in addition to the high collars, silk cravats and love of electronic and soul music – it was the complete inability to apply cosmetics in any sane manner. Sure, Japan's David Sylvian and Duran Duran's Nick Rhodes looked fetching, but only in a *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?* way. And don't even get us started on Steve Strange, who looked like he'd applied his eyeliner while skiing down a mountain. What the boys needed was something like The Makeup Course (***www.makeupcourse.gq.nu***): a complete guide to applying rouge, eyeshadow and lip gloss, as dictated by the shape of your face plus the tone of your skin. And as the course wisely points out: 'Remember: blush can really only go so far...' Hear that, Romos?

WORDS: JENNIFER KEARNS; PICTURES: REX FEATURES, KOBAL

NEW ROMANTICS

Another satisfied customer left barber college

A Flock of Seagulls

www.oz.net/~davester/AFOS/AFOS.html ★★

Where better for a New Romantic band to get their start than in a hairdressers? In the early 80s, a big hairdo and a snazzy synthesiser was often enough to get you noticed – not that Flock of Seagulls didn't have their share of decent pop tunes up those baggy sleeves. Judging from this site, the 'Gulls are still going strong (albeit with only one of the original four members, the geezer with *that* hairdo), although all that hairspray two decades ago doesn't seem to have done his scalp any favours.

Theatre of Marc Almond – The Official Marc Almond Web Site

www.marcalmond.co.uk ★★★

Like so many 80s bands, David Ball and Marc Almond first met at art school, where they discovered a mutual interest in Motown (as did Spandau Ballet, Japan et al). The duo decided to make a go of it as Soft Cell; *Tainted Love* duly became one of the biggest-selling singles of all time; and, with his eyeshadow, lippie, tantrums and love affairs, Marc Almond entered New Romantic history. This comprehensive site covers every inch of the duo's history.

BEST MUSIC SITES ★★★★★

where can I?

FIND A BAND SITE?

www.ubl.com Go here first for the huge search engine.
www.bigmouth.co.uk UK-specific site with tons of links.
www.musicsearch.com Find artist sites or music services.
wallofsound.go.com Links and features from the US.

READ THE LATEST NEWS AND REVIEWS?

www.rollingstone.com The US publication features extra online content.
www.nme.com *NME*'s online version has a reputation for breaking news.
www.qonline.co.uk Increasingly essential online version of the popular magazine.
www.dotmusic.com British site for rock and pop news.

FIND GIGS AND TOURS?

www.ticketlinks.com Full database of musical events.
www.aloud.com Brilliant search engine for gigs, with tickets too.
www.sceneone.co.uk Easy to use.
www.wayahead.com Reliable and competitively priced tickets.

BUY NEW CDS?

www.secondsounds.com Used CDs, actually, but the price is unbeatable.
www.audiostreet.com
A cheap and easy-to-navigate store.
www.boxman.co.uk Easy on the eye.
www.recordstore.co.uk '*The* home of dance music retail on the Net'.

FIND OUT ABOUT MP3S?

www.mp3now.com Good MP3 portal.
www.mp3place.com Fine database.
mp3.lycos.com Browse the MP3 world.
www.mp3.com Heaps of downloads.

POST MY BAND'S MP3S?

www.crunch.co.uk Signs artists exclusively for the site.
www.peoplesound.com A popular unsigned band portal.
www.vitaminic.co.uk New MP3 site.

SecondSounds.com: nice and cheap!

www.clickmusic.co.uk Excellent MP3 portal with downloads.

FIND A NEWSGROUP?

Starting a band, but don't have a singer? Post details at ***rec.audio.pro***.

WATCH BANDS ONLINE?

Visit ***www.virtuetv.com*** for details of new RealVideo live shows.

GET CHATTING?

uk.clubs.yahoo.com/clubs/anthill
An Adam & the Ants chat room.

BRITISH SCI-FI

Brits win the space race

Cardboard sets, wooden acting, sad special effects – welcome to British sci-fi television shows

Thunderbirds

www.thunderbirdsonline.com ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

As soon as you hear the '5-4-3-2-1' countdown, you know you're entering a Gerry Anderson site. Hardto think that upon its release, *Thunderbirds* was the most expensive show ever made, but its recent reappearance on the box was enough excuse for the production of this flash Flash site. There's plenty here to keep fans both young and old involved for hours, and if you want a 'Thunderous' desktop it's yours. Like the programme, it's slightly predictable after a while... but very involving nonetheless.

'Run for the stairs!'

Blake's 7

www.btinternet.com/~blakes.seven

★★★★

Terry Nation's live-action sci-fi drama lasted for only four series from 1978 to 1981, but it's attracted a ferociously loyal fanbase who like nothing better than to meet up in hotels dressed as Avon, Blake or Villa. Check the bloopers page for details of all the wobbling scenery and cameras caught in shot.

Doctor Who

www.bbc.co.uk/doctorwho ★★★★

The good Doctor is another sci-fi icon with a devout band of fans, as witnessed by the hundreds of *Who* sites. The Beeb has produced a complex and in-depth official site featuring dozens of articles, a decent multimedia section and a 'Tardis jump', which takes you to a random point in space and time (well, as long as it's on this Web site).

Survivors

www.geocities.com/mcgreig_2000

★★★

Another classic from the pen of Terry Nation, *Survivors* was an apocalyptic

Do the Tardis jump at bbc.co.uk

Seventies drama in which just about everyone got killed off by a virus except for a bunch of middle-class folks with Land Rovers. The pessimistic tone – our heroes survived, but life is bloody miserable – isn't reflected by this jaunty, well-informed fan site, booming on the back of dyslexic Americans looking for sites about their recent version of *Big Brother, Survivor*.

Red Dwarf

www.afn.org/~afn15301/dwarf.html

★★★

Like it or loathe it, *Red Dwarf* is huge on the Web. If the words 'smeg' and 'mutton vindaloo' leave you rolling on the floor in hysterics, check out the 100 or so *Red Dwarf* links on this page. If they don't, then don't go here. Ever.

BEST TELEVISION SITES ★★★★★

where can I?

FIND PROGRAMME GUIDES FOR POPULAR SHOWS?

www.snpp.com/episodeguide.html Every *Simpsons* episode ever made!

come.to/theroylefamily Episode guide, cast lists, quotes and sounds from *The Royle Family*.

BUY TV MEMORABILIA?

www.tvtoys.com Pick up TV toys, books – and more.

www.noveltytogs.com A great source for *South Park* and *Simpsons* stuff in pounds sterling.

FIND TV LISTINGS?

www.freeserve.com/tvnradio Use the handy instant soap update.

www.radiotimes. beeb.com The listings magazine online.

www.digiguide.co.uk Custom-built UK telly listings.

WATCH TV?

www.virtuetv.co.uk Live events and classic films.

www.dvtv.co.uk The UK's first Net-only station.

www.broadcast.com If it's going live, it'll be listed here.

www.livetv. wwitv.com Hook up with 100+ live TV stations around the world.

FIND TV NEWS AND INFO?

tv.cream.org One of the best sites for old shows.

www.bigglethwaite.com The definitive guide to all the British TV online.

FIND A NEWSGROUP?

rec.arts.drwho Meet other *Dr Who* and sci-fi fanatics here!

FIND A MAILING LIST?

TV sci-fi had to begin somewhere, and one of the earliest – and best – series was *The Twilight Zone*. Put mouse to mat and send a note to ***www.onelist.com/subscribe.cgi/twilightzone/*** for more *TZ* info.

Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy

www.zzg.org ★★★

Home to the official Hitch Hiker's Appreciation Society, you really have to be a fan of Douglas Adams' fine radio series/TV series/books/play to get the most out of this site; so hardcore, they don't even tell you what bit of trivia 'zzg' comes from. Newbies might prefer to start at Adams' Web-based version of the Guide itself at ***www.h2g2.com***.

Space 1999

www.space1999.org ★★★★

A live-action contender from the Anderson stable, this creaky mix of American stars and British special effects failed to set the world alight and resulted in poor old Gerry being reduced to making the likes of *Terrahawks* and *Space Precinct*. This tribute site, however, looks fantastic, with monthly updates backed up by articles on the physics behind moving the Moon out of Earth's orbit. A true labour of love.

Move the Moon at space1999.org

The Prisoner

www.the-prisoner-6.freeserve.co.uk

★★★★

Possibly the weirdest TV series ever made, Patrick McGoohan took his Dangerman character, renamed him 'Number Six' and stuck him in The Village – a psychological prison patrolled by a giant beach-ball. Running for just 17 episodes, Britain's streets were empty as the last instalment aired. *The Prisoner* cult only grows – find out why at this excellent site. Be seeing you!

Quatermass

www.geocities.com/TelevisionCity/8504 ★★

One of TV's unsung heroes, plucky Professor Bernard Quatermass has been saving Britain from alien invasion since the 1950s. Excellent scripts mixed horror and sci-fi to great effect, let down by tacky production values – faithfully, albeit unintentionally, replicated by this enthusiastic fan site.

Ultraviolet

members.nbci.com/LBroadley/uvmain.htm ★★★

British sci-fi shows are often unable to match their special effects-heavy American rivals – but a notable recent exception was *Ultraviolet*, which saw a government agency at war against evil vampires. It took a serious look at the problems of battling the undead, and needless to say only lasted for one series. Join fellow fans here in mourning.

WORDS: GARY PARKINSON/MATTHEW BINGHAM; PICTURES: KOBAL, REX

Get in the festive spirit

From blockbusters to obscure indies, film festivals have them all – so grab some popcorn and take a seat

London Film Festival

www.lff.org.uk ★★★

If you hurry, you can still take part in London's biggest cinema hurrah, which gets cineastes' mouths foaming every November (this year it's 1-16). The 44th annual LFF opens with the premiere of *Jerry Maguire* director Cameron Crowe's music-biz flick *Almost Famous*, and features gala screenings of David Mamet's and Woody Allen's latest offerings. But unless you're a close friend of Guy Ritchie, you're unlikely to get a seat for any of the big-namers – and you're probably better off. This is also the perfect opportunity to catch all the indie tosh that'll most likely never see the light of general release. Log on to find out what's playing where and when.

Sundance Film Festival

www.sundance.org/filmfest/filmfest.html ★★★★

When actor Robert Redford decided that he'd had enough Hollywood malarkey, he proposed that an annual festival be organised in this skiing haven in Utah to 'enhance the artistic vitality of the American film' (it didn't keep him from boring the pants off us with the likes of *The Horse Whisperer* though, did it?). Sundance offers cinematic and video hopefuls the chance to submit their movies, offers workshops for those wanting to learn the game and, perhaps most importantly because of Utah's history, it encourages and supports Native American filmmakers to foster their culture through media. The site also has information on Sundance's sideline film projects.

PICK OF THE NET

Cannes International Film Festival

www.festival-cannes.fr/cannes2000/va/index.html ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

Those of you who are more interested in making the scene than seeing a film should head to Cannes, where what everyone's wearing seems as important as the screenings. This year's festival found Björk picking up the Golden Palm for Best Actress for *Dancer in the Dark*, a film which not only divided critics but also its cast and crew. Next year's event is held from the 9-20 May, so start booking your accommodation now. This official site features RealVideo downloads and interesting facts (the first festival in 1939, for example, had to be postponed when Hitler invaded Poland).

Slamdance Film Festival

www.slamdance.com/2000 ★★★★

It seems that not everyone agrees with Rob Redford's highbrow anti-Hollywood shenanigans, no matter how good his intentions may be. Leading the pack of cinema anarchists are the folks at Slamdance, which is run 'by filmmakers for filmmakers'. Winning Slamdance could earn you up to $70,000 and, even better, a shot at the bigger festivals such as Cannes. Sign up with Slamdance to download RealVideo shorts and receive their newsletter.

Edinburgh International Film Festival

www.edfilmfest.org.uk ★★★★

Edinburgh is the longest continually running film festival in the world (Cannes didn't run every year at first), premiering in 1947 with Frank

If only she'd worn some underwear

Capra's then-box office failure *It's a Wonderful Life* and, this year, following in Cannes' footsteps with Lars von Trier's *Dancer in the Dark*. If you have something to submit, do so before April 2001 to be considered for August's festival. The site also features online film reviews and info about job vacancies in connection with the fest.

Rainbow Network – London Lesbian & Gay Film Festival

www.llgff.org.uk ★★★

Rainbow Network, the Web's leading site for lesbians and gays in the UK, co-sponsors this annual festival which features big-budgeters, documentaries and shorts aimed at homosexual audiences – which isn't to say that no-one else is welcome. Unlike other festivals, the LLGFF doesn't stay put – the core of main films tours the UK, with smaller offerings in different areas. Log on to see how you can become involved; although you're too late for this year's event, you're way early for the next one.

Winfemme Film Festival

www.winfemme.com ★★★

According to *Variety*, Winfemme 'could turn out to be a fountainhead of future film luminaries'. And, seeing as how past winners went on to earn Oscar nominations and that the festival is backed by such Hollywood hard-hitters as Anjelica Huston, Elizabeth Taylor and, er, Madonna (at least she tries), they could well be right. Launched in 1987 with an aim to promote positive images of women, Winfemme screens both classic films and new releases, and honours women who've made their mark in celluloid. The site gives you a chance to vote for your favourite film genre and read about featured directors.

The Hong Kong Film Festival

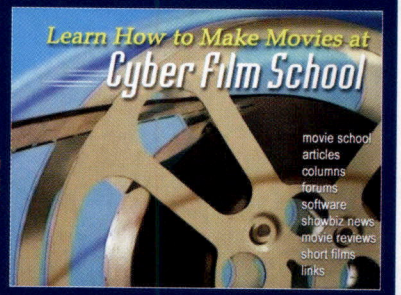
www.hkiff.org.hk ★★★★

Asian cinema has finally come into its own in the West – and not just the chopsocky stuff, either. Perhaps its rising popularity is owed to the success of directors John '*Face/Off*' Woo in Hollywood and Wong '*Chungking Express*' Kar-wai on the festival circuit. Now, with the number of attendees to this non-competitive event steadily growing since 1977, the HKFF looks to become an ever-present reminder of all that talent rising from the East. In addition to all the latest Asian offerings, the festival also screens films from around the world and gives newcomers the chance to attend seminars and workshops. The site's easy to follow, with a nifty screensaver just for film-lovers.

HKFF: more than just chopsocky

AND THEN THERE'S...

The Internet film school



Yearning to make your mark on celluloid or video, or be a participant at a festival rather than just another viewer? The Cyber Film School (*www.cyberfilm-school.com*) promises to teach you the basic art of film- and video-making: it features online film history courses, tests to see if you've got what it takes to be another Scorsese, and tips on how to write a script that won't end up in a producer's wastebin. There's advice on offer from the likes of director John Sayles and actor Kevin Spacey, RealVideo downloads on the rights and wrongs of directing – even an online discussion forum. Seeing as how chief inspector of schools Chris Woodhead has said that 'vacuous' degree courses such as media studies should be done away with, learning your skills online may soon be your only option...

Calcutta Film Festival

www.calfilmfestival.com ★★

The sixth annual Calcutta film festival takes place from 10-17 November, so if you're planning a holiday to India, why not fit in a few movies here and there? According to this site, people in Calcutta would 'rather squat on aisle than miss [a film] for want of a seat', and that passion led to this non-competitive festival's inception. Films from around the world are screened, and close attention is paid to classics from such cinematic luminaries as Eisenstein and Bergman. The site offers in-depth analyses of featured films and directors.

The BBC Short Film Festival

www.britishshortfilmfest.com/indexz.html ★★★★

Debuting in 1987 to showcase short student films, the BBC festival has built up an impressive list of talent in the last 14 years, including Nick Park, whose animated short *A Grand Day Out* featured in the 1989 event. Filmmakers stand to win up to £2,000 for their entries, and past speakers have included Richard Attenborough, Mike Leigh and Ken Loach. Entry forms for next year's festival should be posted on the site soon and, as there's no fee to enter, you have nothing to lose.

BEST MOVIE SITES ★★★★★

where can I?

GET LATEST NEWS AND RELEASE DATES?

www.popcorn.co.uk British perspective on new releases.
aint-it-cool-news.com Gives the inside track on new films.
www.filmunlimited.co.uk Views and news from *The Guardian*.
uk.imdb.com The bible of online film.
www.moviezone.co.uk Find out what's out on video and DVD.

DECIDE WHAT TO SEE?

cinemachine.com Retrieves film reviews from across the Web.
www.filmreview.co.uk A UK-based review site to rival the Americans.
www.mrqe.com With 19,000+ films.
www.movie-trailers.com Trailers for all the latest films.

FIND OFFICIAL FILM SITES?

www.foxmovies.com Links to 20th Century Fox releases.
www.movies.warnerbros.com New films and lost classics.
www.disney.co.uk/disneychannel All the kids' faves in one.

WATCH OR POST AMATEUR SHORT FILMS?

www.cinemanow.com A portal site for new films from around the world.
www.getoutthere.bt.com BT-owned amateur movie site.
www.urbanchillers.com Scary new horror flicks to download.

Film fun for stay-at-homes. Visit www.moviezone.co.uk

www.sightsound.com The place to see *The Quantum Project* – the first full-length, full-budget Net film.

FIND A CINEMA?

www.uci-cinemas.co.uk A fine search engine to locate current screenings.
www.virgin.net/movies Take the hassle out of organising a group trip to the cinema with Virgin's 'email-a-friend' service.
cinema.scoot.co.uk Another fine offering from the people behind the comprehensive directory.
www.cineworld.co.uk UK film portal that also includes a cinema finder.

FIND A NEWSGROUP?

Looking for that hard-to-find classic or forgotten indie flick? Share your plight with others at ***alt.cult-movies***.

JOIN A MAILING LIST?

Don't just watch films – learn about them! Find out how to get on a film theory mailing list by sending an email marked 'info film-theory' to ***majordomo@lists.village.virginia.edu***

GET CHATTING?

buzzcom.com Get the latest word on all the new movies before they're released over here.

WORDS: JENNIFER KEARNS; PICTURE: PA

This bulk pack offers fantastic savings over individually cased CDR's, ideal for your music, MP3's, digital pictures and backups. Each individual disc for under 30p. Exclusively available from Maplin Electronics!

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Frying tonight!

Mmm! – Britain's favourite fast food goes online

Sandy's Fish and Chips Restaurant

www.murrayfield.net/chipper

★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

The Scots are no strangers to the joys of the deep-fryer, plunging pizza and Mars Bars into its oily depths with gay abandon. But there's no sign of such travesties at Calum Richardson's chippy, Sandy's, in Stonehaven, North-East Scotland. We know, because we've read the menu on his exemplary Web site. Not only that, we could have reserved a table, ordered a take-away, booked a taxi, joined the

Sandy's: Mars Bar-less

restaurant's fanclub, entered a competition and read up on a bunch of fish facts. It puts the efforts of many a posh London eatery to shame and, best of all, makes you want to rush out for a juicy piece of haddock.

Harry Ramsden's

www.harryramsdens.co.uk

★★★

From humble beginnings in a 10ft x 6ft wooden hut in Guiseley, Leeds in 1928, Harry Ramsden has spread his battered tentacles across the globe, all the way from Yorkshire to Dubai and even Hong Kong. Get the full story on Britain's real-life Colonel Sanders at this, the official Web site, complete with menus and restaurant locator. Just try to ignore the fact that this 'family' business is, in reality, now an offshoot of the massive Granada empire.

Uktakeaway.com

www.theuktakeaway.com ★★★

There's no shortage of restaurant finders online, but this site allows you to search through its list of 5,343 eating places specifically for chippies. We found the database's coverage to be a bit patchy but it's growing all the time, and you can download selected menus or post a restaurant review. Meanwhile, if you're on the move and fancy a fish supper, use a WAP phone to search ***wap.menunet.co.uk***.

The Great UK Fish and Chip Shop Survey

www.nking.demon.co.uk/fishchip

★★

Not so great, actually – more like a rambling selection of comments and geographical prejudices sorted not by location, restaurant name or quality, but by date of all things. Unscrupulous chip-shop owners might like to post their own 'rave' reviews. Best to stick to the official Fish and Chip Shop of the Year competition, at ***www.seafish.co.uk/fanclub_search.htm***.

Codfish.com

codfish.com ★★★

Believe it or not, cod don't beach themselves, flop around in delicious batter then leap straight into boiling hot fat. No – fisher-folk have to go out and catch the things first, and in some of the most dangerous waters in the world to boot. Find out more at this deep-sea portal site, with its links to trawlers, fisheries, cod biology and recipes. Better hurry, though, before we fish them into extinction.

It was a saveloy that turned Linda to vegetarianism

WORDS: MATTHEW BINGHAM; PICTURE: CORBIS, PA

The other models loved to tease poor Sophie Dahl

BEST FOOD SITES ★★★★★

where can I?

BUY WINE ONLINE?

www.madaboutwine.com
Online shop with good discounts.
www.virginwines.com
Easy to use, even for wine amateurs.
www.chateauonline.co.uk
Top wines at low prices.

GET THE LATEST FOOD NEWS?

www.foodchannel.com
The latest flavours.
www.food.epicurious.com
Cooking tips and forums.

BUY INGREDIENTS ONLINE?

www.tesco.co.uk/indexn.htm The most innovative of the big online supermarkets.
www.sainsburystoyou.com
Eye-pleasing shopping.
www.thaitaste.co.uk
Handsome, newly-launched site specialising in Thai food.

FIND A COOL RESTAURANT?

www.london-restaurants.co.uk
Locate the perfect restaurant in the capital without spending the earth.
www.restaurants.co.uk
Visit one of the recommendations.

LEARN ABOUT GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOOD?

www.greenpeace.org/~geneng

Booze it up in sublime style at ChateauOnline.co.uk

Learn how to avoid genetic foods.
www.monsanto.co.uk
The opposite side of the argument.

FIND A NEWSGROUP?

People love to natter away about batter and grease at ***ba.food***.

GET CHATTING?

Yes, there is a room for fish 'n' chip fans, at ***uk.clubs.yahoo.com/clubs/theinternetshoppingclub***.

GRAPHICS
DVD
SOUND
SPEAKERS
CD-RW
Wouldn't it be cool to carry around your entire music collection?
Sorted.
Live the experience
DIGITAL AUDIO PLAYER
DAP JUKEBOX
All Your Music. Wherever You Go.
The Creative D.A.P Jukebox stores 4 days of hi-fi quality music using MP3 and other future formats. You can enjoy listening to 150 albums, that's 1500 tracks of EAX enhanced audio, wherever you go. Find out more about our latest Personal Digital Entertainment products at WWW.CREATIVEJUKEBOX.COM
CREATIVE
PERSONAL DIGITAL ENTERTAINMENT
Starts Here.
All Your Music. Wherever You Go.

Chord cheat notes got the Quo through many a nighttime gig

Jean, Jeannie

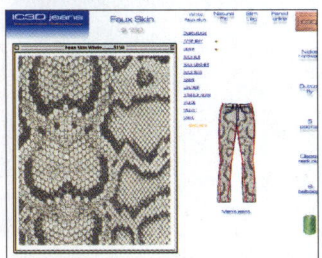
Denim: it never goes out of style (except acid-wash)

IC3D.com

www.ic3d.com/2000/aboutus/about_us.html ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

If there's one item of clothing that's practically impossible to get a good fit in, it's the jean. Too long, short, tight, loose, blue... looking for a well-fitting pair is like looking for an original dotcom idea. This American site, however, allows you to customise your jeans. Simply key in your vital stats and sartorial preferences (number of pockets, colour of stitching) and let this lot make you a perfect pair; you can even have a fave item copied. And all at very uncouture prices: a pair of jeans will set you back about $80 (about £55). No more excuses for looking shabby now...



IC3D: jeans that fit like second skin

Denim

www.arvindmills.com/denim.html ★★★

You may know that the word 'denim' is derived from its place of origin in Nimmes ('de Nimmes'), but how about jeans, which gets its name from the Genoese sailors (the Gens) who first used the fabric? These little nuggets and more can be found at this site from the Indian-based denim manufacturer for brands such as Lee. Gen up on your jean history here.

Levi's

www.eu.levi.com/index_frames.html ★★★

Think of jeans and you think of Levi's; the brand Mr Strauss founded back in 1873 is almost the generic name for that most utilitarian item of clothing. For a comprehensive review of the brand log on here, the official Levi's site, to check out the product ranges. You can't purchase online, but this funky little site tells you where you can go to do so.

Jeans Station

www.jeans-station.co.uk ★★★

Need a new pair of jeans? Go here to get your mitts on a bargain or two – this straightforward, easy-to-use site offers jeans at discount prices. Although not spoilt for choice there are a few well-known brands (including Levi's, Wrangler and Pepe) and the deals are not too shabby – a pair of men's 501s are selling for £37, down from £54.99.

Soft Knees

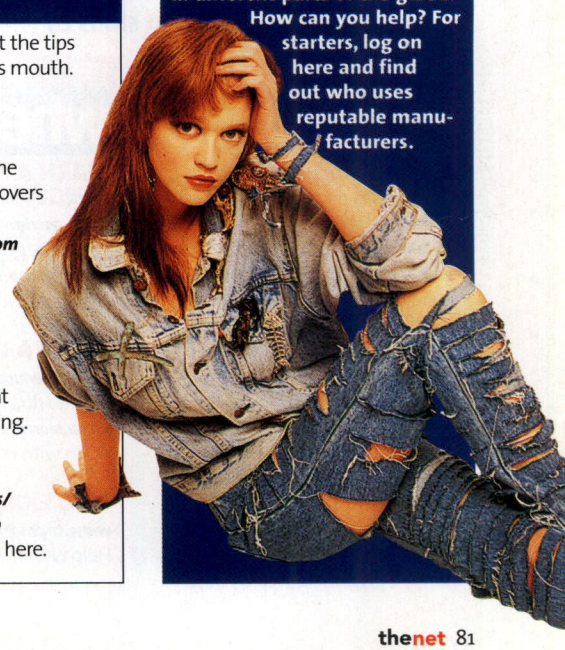
www.softknees.com/jeans.html ★★★

This could well be the product you have been waiting for: specially designed 'soft knees jeans' into which you can slip the 'soft knees' pads that provide comfort while kneeling at work (obviously aimed at those who do more than sit at a desk all day). Invisible to the casual observer, these little miracle workers provide 'cushioned stabilization' while working.

AND THEN THERE'S...

Pants with a conscience

Do you know how your jeans were made? And where? And by whom?' Well, log on to *www.cleanclothes.org/publications/jeans.htm* and you may discover that it was probably in some Third World sweatshop using child labour. Nead, the charity behind this campaign to improve working conditions in the garment industries around the world, has produced a thorough site detailing the situation in different parts of the globe. How can you help? For starters, log on here and find out who uses reputable manufacturers.



BEST CELEBRITIES SITES ★★★★★

where can I?

BUY CLOTHES ONLINE?

www.tops.co.uk Get all the latest goodies from Top Shop and Top Man without having to go there.
www.luxlook.com Luxury fashion goods online, from names like Versace and Vivienne Westwood.
zoovillage.com Funky online shopping aimed at 18-25 year olds.

Zoovillage: be the leader of the pack

FIND THE LATEST FASHION NEWS?

www.fashion-icon.com Find all the latest trends here.
www.fbia.com The Fashion and Beauty Internet Association's hub of fashion info.

SEE THE LATEST FASHION SHOWS?

www.firstview.com/home.html Pictures from those latest and greatest catwalk collections.
www.fashionfile.com News on all the upcoming shows, aimed at the industry and fashion-obsessed.

READ FASHION DOS AND DON'TS?

www.manslife.com/clothes Aimed solely at men (we need it!).
www.cosmomag.com Get the tips straight from the horse's mouth.

GET AN ONLINE MAKEOVER?

www.changeslive.com One of the best online makeovers we found.
www.virtualmakeover. com Buy the software to create a new look.

JOIN A NEWS-GROUP?

alt.fashion Find out what fashion fanatics are saying.

GET CHATTING?

uk.clubs.yahoo.com/clubs/theimternetshoppingclub Meet other shopaholics here.

WORDS: CLAIRE MCHATTIE; PICTURES: REX

The Stan Laurel casting session came to its climax

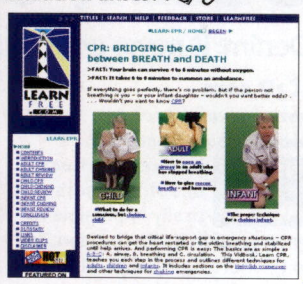
PICK OF THE NET

CPR Training

www.learn-cpr.com ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

'CPR' is cardiopulmonary resuscitation – that combination of the 'kiss of life' and chest compressions they perform every five minutes on *ER*. Now the Web is no substitute for attending a bona fide first aid course, but if you want to brush up on your skills or simply see if you possess the right stuff, work your way through these video exercises presented by US paramedic Charles Proctor. From performing the Heimlich manoeuvre to treating an infant, Charles takes us through the basics; and there are wallet-sized reminder cards designed to be printed out. As he says, 'We hope you never have to use the information... but won't it be nice to know you have the skills if the situation arises?'.



Is there a doctor in the house?

Brush up on your first aid skills or refresh your medical supplies kit on the Web

Surgery Door

www.surgerydoor.co.uk ★★★★

The next time someone walks through a plate glass window, whip out your laptop and surf to Surgery Door for a wealth of no-nonsense medical advice. The 'Emergencies' section is particularly useful for any budding Dr Kildares, with plenty of life-saving tips. Then, once your patient has been patched up and despatched to A&E, you can send them chocolates and flowers via the site.

Emergency Medical Services Reference Page

www.amherst.edu/~jaloduca/ems.html ★★★

Good advice from the Land of the Free: well-organised, step-by-step procedures for dealing with sudden injury, backed up by a wonderful 'Emergency Preparedness Checklist'. Have you assembled a Disaster Supplies Kit, or identified two escape routes for every room in your house? Thought not...

St John's Ambulance

www.sja.org.uk ★★★

For 900 years, these black-clad angels of mercy have been on the

WORDS: MATTHEW BINGHAM (LEARNING), PAUL WINSLOW (SPORT); PICTURES: PA

BEST LEARNING SITES ★★★★★

where can I?

LEARN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE?

www.travlang.com
70 languages to learn online.

www.freetranslation.com
Translate tricky phrases – free.

LEARN A USEFUL SKILL?

www.how2.com
How to do almost anything.

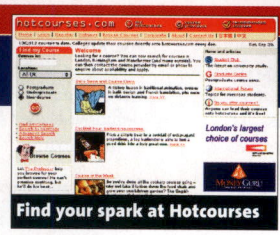
www.learnfree.com
Learn with RealVideo tutorials.

FIND EXAM RESOURCES?

www.topmarks.co.uk
Help with hundreds of topics.

www.learn.co.uk
Useful tips for all.

www.bjpinchbeck.com
The famous homework helper.



LEARN AN INSTRUMENT?

www.pianoworld.com
Tickle those ivories like a pro.

www.cyberfret.com
The 'online college of guitar wisdom'. Tutorials and chords available here.

LEARN WITHOUT SCHOOL?

www.hotcourses.com
Sit in on online tutorials or find an outside course.

www-icdl.open.ac.uk
The OU on the Net.

www.tele-school.org
Learn and interact.

FIND A NEWSGROUP?

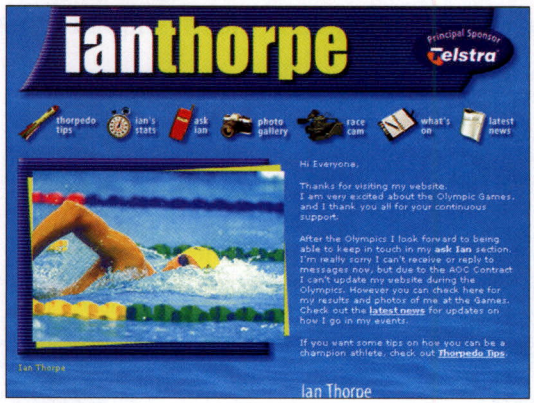
uk.education.teachers
Learn new first aid skills and share your tips with others here.

GET CHATTING?

uk.clubs.yahoo.com/clubs/emergencyfirstaid
Talk about your emergency experiences with first aid experts.

In at the deep end

Swimming may not stand out as a top competitive sport, but the Net still cares



Ian Thorpe

www.ianthorpe.telstra.com.au

★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

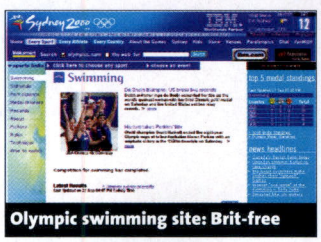
Ask people to name a famous swimmer and the chances are Ian Thorpe will be the first name tripping off their tongues, if only for the fact that it's infinitely easier to remember than the name of the Dutch bloke who beat him in one of the Olympic events. Thorpedo, as he is so inventively nicknamed, turned 18 last month. Unless he starts to take advantage of the fact that he's now legally old enough for a few stubbies, you'll be hearing his name for years to come.

Official Olympics site

www.olympics.com/eng/sports/SW

★★★★

Let's face it, the only time most of us are aware that swimming exists as a competitive sport is during the Olympics. If the names of the aquatic stars of the XXVII Olympiad have already escaped you, then this is your point of reference. It's hardly pleasant reading for the medal-less Brits, though. If swimming alone isn't exciting enough for you, there's always the diving and synchronised sections.

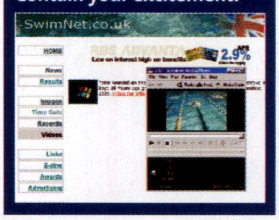


Olympic swimming site: Brit-free

AND THEN THERE'S...

Speedy splashin'

It's not as if watching swimming footage is particularly exciting in the first place, but one particular nugget we found on SwimNet (*www.swimnet.fsnet.co.uk*) takes the biscuit. Click on the video section and you have the one option: that of watching Peter Arundell (who he?) during his record breaking 100m breaststroke in the 'Boys 15 Years' age group at the Essex County Championships 1999. It lasts about four seconds and looks like anyone else making their way through the water. Contain your excitement.



SwimInfo

www.swiminfo.com

★★★

There isn't much in the way of interesting swimming content on the Web, but then people making their way through water as fast as they can doesn't translate particularly well onto the interactive multimedia extravaganza that is the Net. If you want a portal for news, advice and online shopping, then this is just about as good as it gets – although it is somewhat US-centric.

Amateur Swimming Association

www.britishswimming.org ★★★★

Wanted: anyone who can make their way from one side of the pool to the other, faster than everyone else, in order to win Olympic medals. You will be tremendously fit, enjoy early morning starts, and be able to swim like a dolphin. Size 15 feet an advantage. Payment: Gold or Bronze, depending on your experience and talent. Apply at any swimming pool near you.

Aussies sought underwater refuge from the hordes of tourists

For more sports sites, turn to Need to Know on page 102

If your family is disaster-prone, why not buy your first aid kit online?

sidelines at marathons, football matches and crusades, poised with magic sponge and band-aids as they wait for the crack of breaking bone. If you're serious about becoming a first aider, sign up as a volunteer and spend every weekend for the rest of your life attending county shows for free. Now that's what we call entertainment!

You Bet Your Life!

library.thinkquest.org/10624/gameshow.html ★★

Test your new-found aider skills with the help of this online quiz, compiled with a wicked sense of humour. For example: 'When a limb is severed, do you: a) wrap it in sterile cloth and place it in a bag with ice; b) place it in cool, fresh milk; c) hold it in place on the body; d) turn on the grill?'.

First Aid Direct

www.firstaid-direct.co.uk ★★★

Your tender hands can only do so much – for the hardcore healer a first aid kit is essential. Choose from home, travel and business kits at First Aid Direct, all supplied in natty green boxes. And if your family is particularly accident-prone you can buy all the essentials online. Extra large wound dressings go for just £1.32! Foil blankets, £1.85!

Lots of free tea, when you join the SJA

Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents

www.rospa.com ★★

Prevention is better than a cure, they say, so why not avoid bloodshed in the first place? RoSPA's been trying to stop us from falling down manholes, stepping out in front of traffic and setting the chip-pan on fire for 80 years, and this Web site gathers together all that experience in a series of worthy factsheets. Try reading them out to friends and family in a suitably school-marm-like voice.

TRAGIC DEATHS

They died too young

As celebrated in death as they were in life, the Web keeps the mystique of these celebs alive

Michael Hutchence Memorial Website

www.michaelhutchence.org

★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

Pity Tiger Lily: her mother died after a heroin-and-alcohol cocktail and her father's early demise came after an autoerotic sex act. Maybe she'll find some consolation in Susie and Kelland Hutchence's site – a tribute to their dead son Michael. It features previously unseen pictures, personal messages to wee Tiger (haven't they heard of a phone?), as well as a multitude of trivia and info to 'de-mystify' the most ardent Hutchence addict. Note: pictures a-plenty of Tiger, Michael and the family, but none of Paula and Helena...

Hutchence: suicide?

Marc Bolan

www.primenet.com/~regenold/marc/marc.html ★★★

The tree-impacting T-Rex star has plenty of sites commemorating his life and work, but this one stands out because of its simplicity and well-organised links. If you want to find lyrics, poems, details of Bolan's funeral or any details of Bolan's life, then start your search here.

Tribute to Kurt Cobain

www.geocities.com/kfang4 ★★★

If you're keen to view Cobain's actual suicide note – yes, really – then log on. However, while the mental state of the Nirvana frontman at the time of his death is unclear, don't even attempt to gauge the stability of his fans and their potty sites on the Web. This is probably one of saner ones, even with the Webmaster's rant on why Courtney was responsible for his death, and the comment: 'someday... Courtney...someday...' Scared? She should be.

James Dean Is Not Dead

www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Studio/4604 ★★★★

Er, yes he is, mangled when his Porsche crashed leaving his mechanic with a few scratches. The site, however, is not some sort of 'Dean's alive, I tell you, alive!' mad propaganda jobby; the title is just telling us that Dean lives on here, on these pages. And very efficient and informative they are, too.

Marilyn Monroe

www.ionet.net/~jellenc/marilyn.html ★★★

The original *Candle in the Wind*, the best parts about this site are the comprehensive links to specific merchandise. Norma Jean stamps or phonecards anyone? The biography is detailed, with quotes from the screen siren herself, while you can also look at the details of her will. Lucky old May Reis, whoever she was – Marilyn left her $40,000.

Marilyn: murdered?

We'll Always Remember Sid Vicious

www.hotshotdigital.com/WellAlwaysRemember.2/SidVicious.html ★★

He was only 21 when he died, after stabbing his lover Nancy to death four months earlier, but Sid has spawned many a Web site. Some describe how he 'suffered injuries on stage, bled through performance (sic), and doggedly pursued his heroine (sic) addiction'. This site, however, is a basic, straightforward tribute providing the facts, a history and competent links.

Vicious: overdose?

The Shrine to Bruce Lee

www.ocf.berkeley.edu/~chenj/brucelee/brucelee.html ★★★★

There should definitely be a warning before you log on here – not just for epilepsy sufferers, but anyone with a nervous disposition who might not appreciate the irritatingly constant Bruce Lee kung fu graphics that flash away on the page. The 'Curse of the Dragon' struck Lee down aged 32 but by then he'd made plenty of films, most of which are represented in the site's photo gallery.

In Loving Memory of Brandon Bruce Lee

www.invis.com/brandon ★★

The Curse of the Dragon continues as Brandon Bruce Lee, only son of Bruce, was shot dead on the set of

Bruce Lee: accident?

BEST CELEBRITIES SITES ★★★★★

where can I?

FIND GOOD GOSSIP?

www.mrshowbiz.com The fastest track to loads of gossip, with the odd exclusive, too.

www.celebritypalace.com Plenty of gossip, plus links and resources.

FIND A STAR'S ADDRESS?

www.thezone.pair.com/email After emailing, you can pop by for a visit – this site also provides addresses.

www.celebrityemail.com Over 14,000 celebs on its pages, from supermodels to princes. Forwards your messages automatically.

READ MAGAZINES?

www.eonline.com The latest happenings in the worlds of music, TV, film and video.

www.people.com Online version of the American *People* magazine.

FIND CELEBRITY HOME PAGES?

www.celebsites.com Links to official sites of celebrities from all walks of fame.

www.usfanclubs.com Masses of links to official sites and fan clubs for all kinds of celebs.

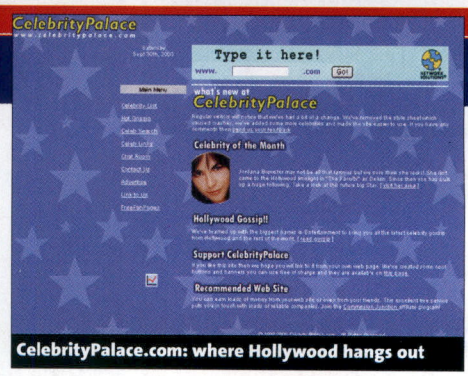
MEET MY HERO?

www.yack.com Updated list of celebrity events.

www.iknewthemwhen. com Meet the stars before they were famous.

FIND A NEWSGROUP?

alt.gossip.celebrities If you've got a juicy tidbit that you're just dying to reveal, why not do it here?



CelebrityPalace.com: where Hollywood hangs out

JOIN A MAILING LIST?

It seems that classic rockers don't have the longest of shelf lives, but their music does! Find other tune-lovers like yourself by sending an email marked 'more info' to ***littlewing15@hotmail.com***.

GET CHATTING?

www.hollywoodnetwork.com Chat about – and with – top celebs here.

WORDS: GARY PARKINSON; PICTURES: RETNA, KOBAL

Young guns having some fun... whoops!

TRAGIC DEATHS

The Crow. There are plenty of Brandon sites to chose from but as one of the guestbook signees says: 'I would recommend [this site] to anyone who loved Brandon as much as I did.' Plenty of baby pics, too.

John Lennon

www.merseyworld.com/imagine

★★★

'It is better that they [stars] burn out in the prime of their life than to fade away,' says 'Sprout' on the message-board. Perhaps Sprout has a point: the idea of a 60-year-old Lennon romping on a bed with Yoko doesn't really inspire. But the real draw here is the interaction with Lennonites.

Princess Diana

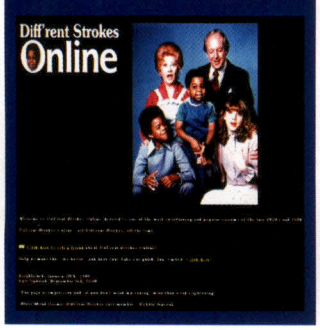
members.aol.com/mustango64/diana.html ★★★★

'These pages are intended to remind us of the tremendous outpouring of affection...for this remarkable woman,' the site announces. Wonder what they would make of recent 'revelations' that claim she was a cantankerous old moo. Don't forget that other woman with an eating disorder, Karen Carpenter: ***closetoyou.org/carpenters***.

AND THEN THERE'S...

Curse of Strokes

Diff'rent Strokes, **the sitcom which delighted a generation from 1978 to 1986, was based around rich young Kimberly (Dana Plato) and her two adopted black brothers, Wilis (Todd Bridges) and Arnold (Gary Coleman). But since the show finished, the fortunes of the cheery trio haven't been exactly sparkling. Plato served a prison sentence and later died due to a prescription drug overdose; Bridges has been accused, and acquitted, of the attempted murder of an alleged drug dealer; while pint-sized Coleman ('Whatyou talking about, Wilis?') has sued his parents for financial mismanagement, been accused of beating up female bus drivers and worked as a security guard. Which one is next for the chop?** ***www.sitcomsonline.com/diffrentstrokes.html***



WORDS: MATTHEW BINGHAM; PICTURE: CORBIS

SAFES

'Where do you want this box of Brink's, pal?'

Cracking safes

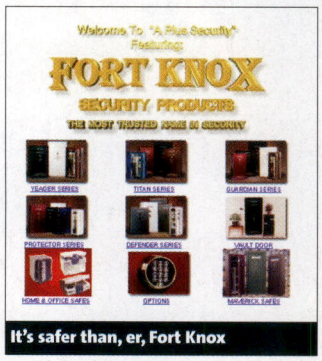
You've got potloads of cash – but where to keep it?

Fort Knox Security Products

www.fort-knox.net ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

From their Tuscon, Arizona bolthole, the good people at A Plus Security offer the full range of Fort Knox products – the finest safes in the world. Check out the 'Maverick', a grey-sided slab of a safe that would give any jelly-man a nightmare. Or how about the 'Yeager' – available in white with gold trim, and one of those dead cool spinning handles on the front? They come with a selection of carpeted interiors, options like a hand-painted wildlife mural or a gun rack on the back of the door, and can be sent anywhere. The only drawback is that shipping is charged by weight – and the top-of-the-range 'Titan' weighs a hefty 1,790lb.



It's safer than, er, Fort Knox

Churchill Safes

www.chursafe.com ★★★★

Paranoid homeowners can enter the amount of cash and valuables they want to safeguard at Churchill's Web site, which then picks the most suitable freestanding, underfloor or 'DIY' safe. Prices start at under £100, there's an online demonstration of an installation, and if you're worried your lock has become obsolete you can simply buy a whole new door from them.

Phoenix Safe

www.phoenixsafe.co.uk ★★★

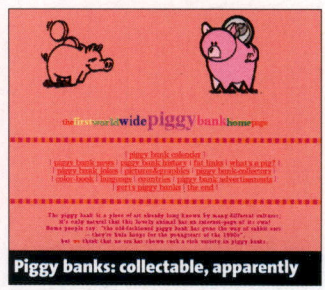
The Phoenix Safe Company has been manufacturing safes in Liverpool since 1799. You can order any item online – from simple strongboxes all the way up to reinforced cabinets, aimed at small businesses – and they're all guaranteed flameproof. And just to prove the point, the Phoenix offices were gutted in a fire four years ago, yet all documents survived. Hoorah!

Piggy Bank Homepage

www.geocities.com/Paris/9896

★★★

For an object destined to meet its end at the hands of a skint, hammer-wielding pre-teen, there seem to be an awful lot of piggy banks left intact. You'll find many of them – some might say too many – on this enthusiastic fan page, complete with piggy bank jokes, links, history and trivia. For example, the Polish for piggy bank is 'scarbonka swinka'. Who said the Net wasn't educational?



Piggy banks: collectable, apparently

Lower prices... and more cover

No matter what you want to buy, the Asset Advance card from Lloyds TSB will revolutionise your shopping experience

The best price guaranteed...

After a bargain? The Asset Advance card has been specifically designed for that purpose offering a free 'Best Price' guarantee on goods worth up to £1000 bought with the Asset Advance card. This means if you see the item on sale at a cheaper price within 30 days, you could claim the difference.*

...and longer warranty!

What's more, Asset Advance cardholders also enjoy Extra Protection with a free extended warranty on many new household appliances bought with their Asset Advance card. This can add a full year to the manufacturer's guarantee for appliances worth up to £1000. So Asset Advance cardholders can rest easy knowing that the goods they buy will be protected for an extra year!

Terms and conditions apply to both Best Price cover and Extended Warranty.
*Less the first £25 and excluding goods such as holidays, food, travel, clothing and motor accessories.

Any Asset Advance cardholder who uses the card to buy an item will have the price difference refunded, if they spot the same item on sale at a lower price within 30 days!

Products include Audio/hi-fi, including CD player, television (up to 28"), video cassette recorder, camcorder, microwave, oven, hob cooker, fridge and freezer

The card for you and what it can do

- No annual fee
- Competitive standard rate of **13.9% APR**
- Balance transfer rate of **9.9% APR** for the life of the balance
- **Free** 12 months extended warranty with Extra Protection
- Best Price cover
- **Free** additional card

For further information log on to **www.lloydstsb.com** or phone 0800 056 0150 (Quote reference: net)

online shopping is fun and easy

Here's the net and Lloyds TSB Asset Advance guide to buying from the Internet

Always make sure that you buy from 'secure' sites. This will ensure that your personal details are encrypted before they are sent, and therefore cannot be read by anyone else. You can see if you are on a secure site by checking if the URL begins with 'https://',or look out for a padlock or key symbol on your screen

Be wary when shopping with companies that aren't a brand-name. If you haven't heard of a company, ask friends if they are aware of it, or do an Internet search to see if anyone has had any bad experiences shopping there.

Never send your credit card details by email. It's far easier for emails to be intercepted, so don't oblige if a company asks you for them.

Keep an eye out for contact numbers and postal addresses on the site. If something does go wrong, you can easily reach someone from the company.

Make sure to print out your contract – it's the only permanent record of your purchases. If you don't get one after completing the buying process,email the company and ask them to send you one.

Note the delivery costs and times before you buy – you don't want to end up with a hefty delivery charge on something that doesn't cost very much.

And if something does go wrong, don't panic! Despite scare stories, online shopping is just as safe as the traditional method. It's in the online store's interest to sort out any problems as quickly as they can.

For written details of the credit terms, please write to Lloyds TSB Bank plc, PO Box 112, Canons House, Canons Way, Bristol BS99 7LB. How much Lloyds TSB Bank plc will lend (if any) and the issue of an Asset Advance card by Lloyds TSB depends on Lloyds TSB's assessment of your financial position. You must be over 18 to apply. Interest rates may vary. There is no interest-free period. Lloyds TSB Bank plc is a member of the Banking Ombudsman Scheme and a signatory to the Banking Code.

Lloyds TSB

ASSET ADVANCE

www.lloydstsb.com

General Insurance advice is provided by Lloyds TSB Insurance Services Limited which acts as an independent intermediary for a number of insurers under the Association of British Insurers' Code of Practice. Registered in England No. 968406. 71, Lombard Street, London, EC3P 3BS.

Seasons in the sun

The bitter, cold weather can only mean one thing – it's time for a bit of winter sun. But where to go...?

Skin Biology

www.skinbiology.com/morehealthysuntanning.html

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD ★★★★★

Although not strictly (or even loosely) a winter sun destination per se, this is required reading if the main reason you're going on holiday is to transform yourself into a bronzed Adonis. This clear and info-packed site argues the pros and cons of tanning, gives advice and, despite some cheery subheads ('Types of radiation'), generally has a sunny view of tanning. So if all you can afford is a wet weekend in Margate this winter, spend the money on a trip to your local tanning emporium instead.

Fun Barbados

www.funbarbados.com ★★★★

Have! Fun! In! Barbados! Aside from an overuse of exclamation marks, this site provides a good, well-rounded picture of one of the best of the Caribbean islands. Plan your trip here: with suggestions on what to see, nightlife and tours, this eager little site has it all. And if the thought of Barbados stirs up fears of having to take out a second mortgage to pay for the trip, have no fear – because Fun Barbados has a few cheaper suggestions, too.

Amazing Thailand

www.thailand-travelsearch.com ★★★★

Don't let Leonardo DiCaprio put you off visiting the backpackers' favourite destination; this beautiful country is perfect at winter. To help you along, check out this comprehensive, info-packed site for basic facts such as what to expect when you first arrive, plus lists of recommended reading, travel tips – handy or otherwise – and a language translator ('hello' is 'sa-wat-dee'). Not the most stylish site by any means, but easy to get around and contains more info than you'll know what to do with. Lar-korn, now.

South Africa

www.go2africa.com/south-africa ★★★★

The flight may be a tad expensive, but once in South Africa you're laughing; everything, from food to wine to gifts to clothes, is incredibly cheap. To help plan your spending, this easy-to-use and well laid out site has a wealth of information. It details a variety of trips including that perennial favourite: wine tasting. Check out a fine Pinotage or two at one of the beautiful wine farms dotted around Cape Town, but remember: this time swallow, don't spit.

'Is that a poodle in your pocket, or are you just glad to see me?'

Web Travel Review – New Zealand

www.photo.net/nz ★★★★

If you really want to get away from our cold shores and escape to a relaxing, warm haven, you can't do much better (or go much further) than New Zealand. With nearly half the country unpopulated – and the other half not much busier – New Zealand is the place to go for quiet contemplation of burning issues, such as why are there 68 million sheep and only 3.4 million people? Check out this site for handy hints from fellow visitors to the land of the kiwi fruit.

Canary Islands

www.travel.lycos.com/Destinations/Europe/Spain/Canary_Islands ★★★

If you do fancy a bit of winter sun but aren't incredibly keen on flying, you might be imposing one hurdle too many on your quest for heated climates. But, never fear, all is not lost; just a mere four hours south of our chilly little island are the sun and sangria-soaked Canaries. Check out the places to see – and to miss – at this well laid out site that tells it like it is: the islands can be 'a seething mass of oiled flesh', apparently.

AND THEN THERE'S...

Nice weather... for ducks

Weather is the Brits' favourite topic of conversation, either to complain about (too wet/cold/hot – admittedly, the latter's a rare occurrence) or to get depressed about (too wet/cold etc). And now, with the wonderful World Wide Web, you can read about it all day, every day – and not just the climactic occurrences in your backyard. Log on to *www.onlineweather.com* and discover that round about now in Irkutsk, it's hitting -17C, while the Sahara desert should be enjoying temperatures of around 57 degrees – Celsius!

WORDS: CLAIRE MCHATTIE; PICTURES: KOBAL

Goa Travel Guide

www.travel.indiamart.com/goa
★★★

The end of October to the end of February is the ideal time to visit Goa, the small island off the coast of India so beloved of hippies. Although the peace-loving travellers have now been replaced by the ubiquitous backpacker, Goa's 'unique syncretic blend of East and West is at once exotic and strangely familiar' (it says here). So what are you waiting for? Check out this well-organised site for the essential Goa.

Mexico

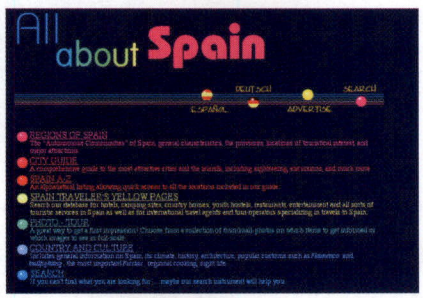
www.excite.com/travel/countries/mexico ★★★★

From the seedy border town of Tijuana (avoiding the stampede of Mexicans crossing into the US) to the 'perfect winter sun' resort of Acapulco, this site is packed with information on all the main areas of Mexico. Clearly and easily laid out, the guide contains an incredibly useful 'do's and don'ts' section (don't drink water after eating spicy food – lick salt or sugar instead). And be prepared for Mexico City – the largest city in the world, with a population of 20 million.

All About Spain

www.red2000.com/spain ★★★★

For something a bit closer to home, southern Spain, although not as warm as some of the far-flung destinations, is a good short-haul winter sun bet. This *very* thorough site is loaded with info on Spain: from sections on regions, city guides, an A-Z and accommodation details, to general info on Spain and her history. And that's just the opening page. Nice info, shame about the rainbow colour scheme...



BEST TRAVEL SITES ★★★★★

where can I?

FIND THE BEST HOLIDAY AND FLIGHT DEALS?

www.a2btravel.co.uk Britain's biggest online travel agent.
www.myownprice.com This site tries to match the price you want to pay.
www.deckchair.com Comprehensive flight-finders.

GET DESTINATION INFO?

www.virgin.net/travel/cityguides All the info you need for a short break.
www.roughguides.com From the publishers of the guides.
www.lonelyplanet.com Let the travel experts guide you.

GET DOS AND DON'TS?

www.tips4trips.com 1,000 handy 'tips for trips'.
www.fco.gov.uk/travel Get info on countries before setting off.
www.travel-news.org Good source of independent news for travellers.
www.etravel.org A neat and tidy online travel mag, with plenty of handy tips.

FIND ACCOMMODATION?

www.placestostay.com This will find you a suitable place to rest up.
www.cottage-net.ndirect.co.uk Self-catering database.
www.smoothhound.co.uk A guide to B&Bs and hotels across the UK.

SPEND A DAY OUT IN BRITAIN?

www.LondonTown.com/index2.html Things to do in the Big Smoke.
www.virgin.net/daysout Tips galore.
www.britainexpress.com A jam-packed travel and heritage guide.

FIND A NEWS-GROUP?

alt.travel Pick up travel tips here.

GET CHATTING?

If your break didn't live up to expectations, vent your spleen at ***HolidayComplaint.com***. You'll feel better for it.

CHESS

Check this out

Sixty-four squares, 32 pieces, dozens of Web sites

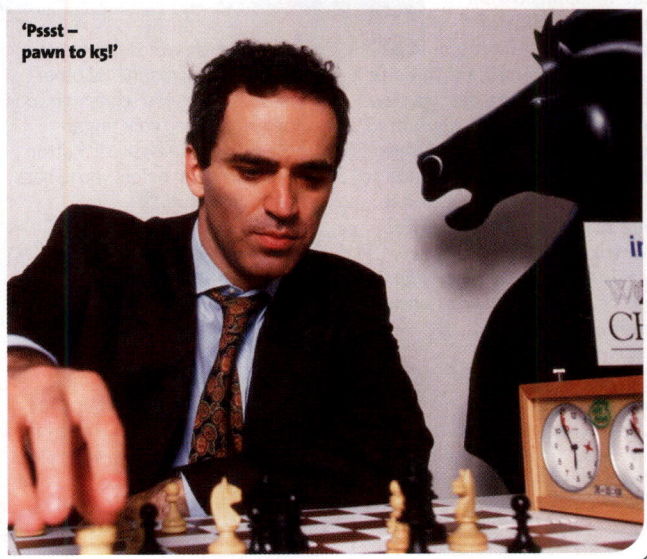
PICK OF THE NET

Kasparov Chess

www.clubkasparov.com ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

Where better to have a game of chess online than the home of the greatest ever player? World champion Garry K allows you to study at the KC University under the game's leading grandmasters; more than 40 new lessons are added every month. You can also become a member and get involved in all interactive aspects of the game, from chat to gameplay. With a magazine, shopping gallery and full championship news, once more it's checkmate to Kasparov.



The London Chess Centre

www.chesscenter.com ★★★★

Interesting spelling for a London shop bulging with decorative chess sets like the 'Battle of Culloden'; or perhaps the 'Alice in Wonderland' will appeal more. On the other hand, you can forget the real world and buy into virtual chess with all the latest software. And there's more to this site than boards, bishops and books, with an auction, plus downloads and a decent netzine, *The Week in Chess*.

The Chess Variant Pages

www.chessvariants.com ★★★★

If the game isn't hard enough already, check out these little numbers: 3D chess, 4D chess, chess on an 8x8x8 board, *Star Trek* chess – they're all here. There are also different moves for traditional pieces and multiple move variants. Perhaps not for the purist, but there's always some smartarse who will try and reinvent the wheel.

Chess is fun

www.princeton.edu/~jedwards/cif/intro.html ★★★

As the name would suggest, this is one for the beginner. Run by US Correspondence Chess Champion Jon Edwards, the split-screen site features menus on the left and tutorials on the right. It's basic but has fantastic tips, all supported by graphics to illustrate the point. Fun it almost certainly isn't, but light and informative it is.

US Chess Federation

www.uschess.org ★★★

With almost 90,000 members – try to visualise Wembley full of Nigel Shorts in Bermuda shorts (well, they're American) – the USCF is a big hitter, publishing two magazines. Sadly, the online output is little more than an uploading of the mag content and lists of links. You'd imagine the chess bods would be able to think through the available options more thoroughly...

WORDS: PAUL YELLAND; PICTURES: EMPICS

Shock it to me, baby!

Is your browser Shocked up? Then start playing!

Shockwave

www.shockwave.com

★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

Not only is Shockwave the best plug-in the Web has ever seen (and winner of *thenet* Award 2000 for Best Use of Multimedia), but it's also been responsible for inspiring a mass of fantastic content. It would be somewhat worrying if this site didn't have all the best games... and you won't be disappointed with what you find. Be sure to download the Shockmachine so you can cut down your phone bills and save your favourite games onto your hard drive, making sure you get the most out of a whole range of wicked multimedia content.

Shockwave: throwing a spanner in the daily grind

At the Crossroads

www.atthecrossroads.com ★★★

After all that mindless fun and games, it's time to put your brain into gear and exercise the grey matter. At the Crossroads has a huge range of mind games such as crosswords, wordsearches, code-busters and all manner of other teasers to have you scratching your noggin and keep your finger hovering over the 'solve it' button. It won't be long before you're back on the easy stuff.

CleverMedia Shockwave Arcade

www.clevermedia.com/arcade/

★★★

Most of the games here are merely twists on old classics, but there's some original games to get your pulse racing as well. Air Hockey fans will be delighted to find the excellent translation of that classic, and be sure to check out the Flash Arcade. It comes complete with the *Urinal Game* so you can check the standard of your toilet etiquette.

Bunko

www.bunko.com ★★★★

If you're looking for political correctness, then this isn't really the place to point your browser. Play *Club the Seals* where the aim is to, well, club some seals accompanied by groovy dance music. Alternatively, there's *Lose an Eye*, in which you get the chance to jab at kiddies' eyes. The rest are somewhat less controversial, but just as fun.

Online Shockwave Games

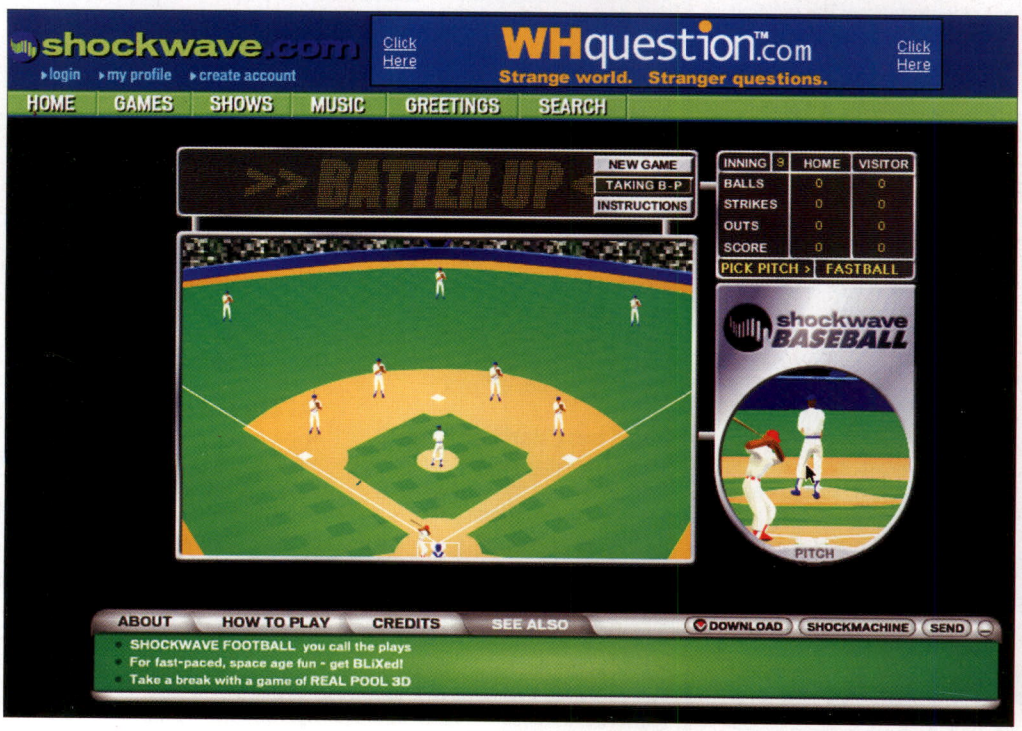
onlinemediagroup.com/goldrake/shock.shtml ★★★

It doesn't look good, it isn't easy to navigate, but if you've got a bit of time to have a meander around this site, it'll lead you to a huge variety of games and other sites offering Shockwave content. If you want arcade classics such as *Pacman* or *Breakout*, this could be the best place to start.

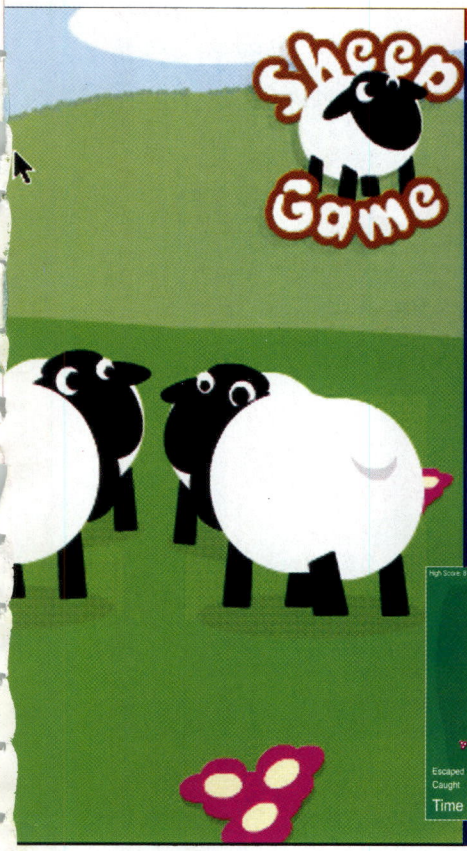
GameLand

www.game-land.com ★★★★

Anyone who was ever addicted to Daley Thompson's *Decathlon* or *Track and Field* will be delighted with the new additions to this site. There's the chance to hurdle, throw and shoot like you used to when you were a kid, but if you're more of a racing nut, there are a fleet of



Seaside fun at clevermedia.com



AND THEN THERE'S...

Herd the latest?

There's no limit to the number of people who are prepared to spend hours of their own time creating nonsensical games for a number of people who are prepared to spend hours of their own time playing nonsensical games. The latest is virtual sheep herding (*www.sheepgame.co.uk*). Take a herd of sheep, a pen to herd them into and... that's it, really. Tell the rest of the office and they'll be meeting around the coffee machine to discuss their best times before you know it. Well, we did.

The scrawniest nerds can pretend to be handsome, golden gods at GameLand

driving games. Casino fans, meanwhile, will enjoy the cards and slot machines.

Ezone

www.ezone.com ★★★

The site may not be as well organised as others, but there are 66 games to choose from in a variety of genres. A nice touch is the chance to play a mini-*Breakout* while you're loading the game of your choice – which just has to be *Santa Goes Butt Boardin'*; it may not be the best game, but it undoubtedly has the best name.

Virtual Arcade

www.thearcade.com ★★★★

Playing computer games is all well and good, but it's just not the same as going down to the arcade with your mates and a bag full of 10p pieces to stuff in the slots of various games. There's no wonderful plastic buttons and joysticks, but this virtual arcade is wonderfully evocative; and you never have to wait to play the game you want.

Candystand.com

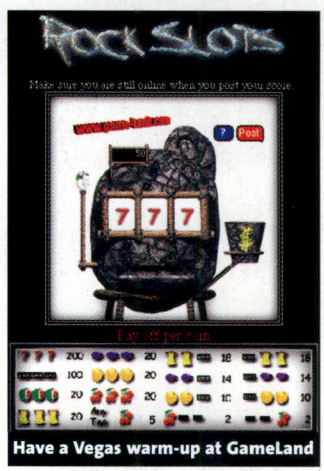
www.candystand.com ★★★★

Now then, this is what we want to see from business sites: instead of bombarding us with loads of corporate crap, just create a fantastic array of games to play and then brand them with all your product names. We might not buy your products, but we'll be thankful for all the fun we have when we're playing.

24-Hour Games

www.free-gaming.com/online.htm ★★★

Yet another excellent collection of links to some of the best Shockwave content on the Web. Be sure to play *Snow Craft* – one of our all-time favourites – and if you fancy a bit of celebrity-bashing, there's the excellent *MudSlinger* game, where you take the role of American talk-show host, Jay Leno and throw a whole wheelbarrow-load of soil at famous people.



Have a Vegas warm-up at GameLand

BEST GAMES SITES ★★★★★

where can I?

PLAY GAMES ONLINE?

www.gameszone.com
A free service that covers all of Europe.
www.theclq.com/main.asp
The Champions League of *Quake*.

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Excellent deals on a range of games.
www.game-retail.co.uk
The shop of the High Street store.
www.chipsworld.co.uk
The best selection of console games on the Web.
www.simplygames.co.uk
Worth checking out for cheap prices.

FIND DEMOS?

www.happypuppy.com
New demos and shareware games.
www.gameaddict.net
Demos and reviews for PC games.
www.3dfiles.com
Demos and shareware downloads.
www.acdownload.com
Plenty of great downloads.

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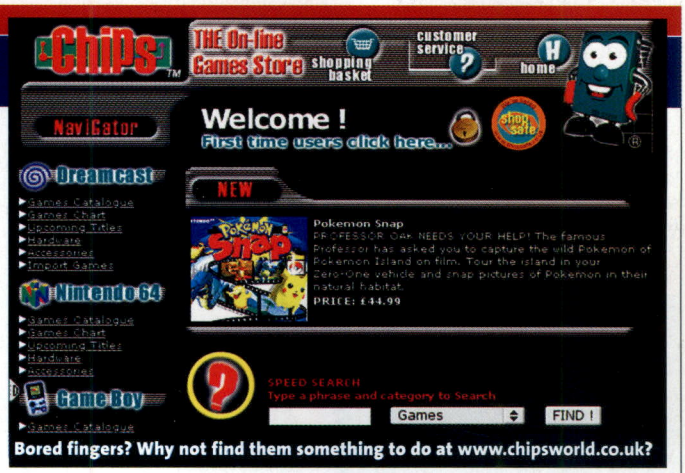
www.gamesdomain.co.uk
News and game-related features.
www.gamedaily.com
Get the latest news on this site.

FIND HINTS AND CHEATS?

www.cheatfinder.co.uk
No-fuss UK-based cheat portal.
www.xcheater.com
A large back catalogue of cheats.
www.ign.com
Thorough worldwide games news.

PLAY TRADITIONAL GAMES?

games.yahoo.com
Card games, board games and much more at a name you know and love!
www.pogo.com
Both traditional and arcade games.



Bored fingers? Why not find them something to do at www.chipsworld.co.uk?

FIND A NEWSGROUP?

Asking 'what the bleedin' 'eck are those games on about?'? Have your questions answered by those in the know at ***macromedia.director.lingo***.

GET CHATTING?

www.geocities.com/TimesSquare/Arcade/6469/chat.html
Get help with games like *Quake* through chat.

WORDS: PAUL WINSLOW

ANCIENT EGYPT

Mummy leapfrog was a painfully slow affair

Fair's pharaoh

Get the lowdown on one of the oldest civilisations

Ancient Egypt

guardians.net/egypt ★★★★★

You could spend hours perusing dusty tomes in your local library to find all the information that this ugly-but-informative site leads to – it's absolutely jam-packed with links galore to everything on Ancient Egypt, including everyday life, kings and queens, mythology and religion, pyramids, mummies and archaeological digs. And if you like what you see there are recommendations for trips and tours of Egypt.

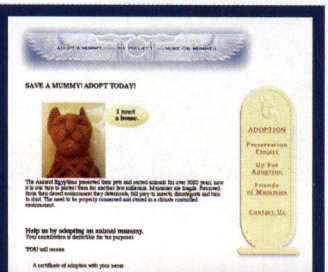
Mummification

www.ancientegypt.co.uk/mummies ★★★★

There's no denying it: mummies are interesting. And this simple-but-informative site from the British Museum will tell you all you could possibly want to know about them, from the interesting (the fingers and toes were individually wrapped) to the gruesome (a long hook was used to smash the brain and pull it out through the nose). And even better, it all comes with diagrams. Check out the intro page at ***www.ancientegypt.co.uk*** for tons more Egyptian information.

AND THEN THERE'S...

Puss in bandages



We all know that humans were mummified, but did you know that animals were also worshipped and received the bandage treatment? Naturally, they're starting to look a bit worse for wear now (5000 years would even take its toll on Cliff Richard) and they need a lot of looking after, so why not preserve a bit of heritage and adopt a mummy? View the Cairo Museum catalogue, pick your adoptee (cat $100, small snake $50) send off your cash and receive a certificate of adoption and a photo of your mummy (suitable for framing).See *www.animalmummies.com/adopt.html* for more details – and pictures.

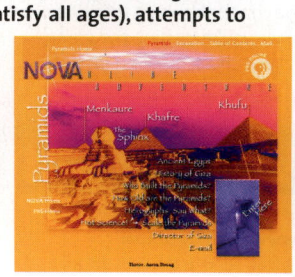
PICK OF THE NET

Explore the Pyramids

www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/pyramid/explore ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

OK, so in these fair isles we've got the splendour of Stonehenge, but there's no architecture on Earth that causes quite so much wonder and confusion as the pyramids. This beautiful and helpful site (which, although aimed at children, is extensive enough to satisfy all ages), attempts to explain some of the mysteries surrounding their construction and use – excellent diagrams and some absolutely fantastic movies allow you to take a virtual tour down into the depths and up the claustrophobic tunnels of the pyramids. Also be sure to read all the great stuff on excavation and hieroglyphics – the Internet hits the 3rd Century BC.



Ancient Egypt: the Mythology

www.egyptianmyths.com ★★★★

A whopping great site that attempts to explain a whopping great subject, and actually does rather a good job – there's loads of information on the topic, including massive glossaries to explain just about every word you could think of. Useful for games of Trivial Pursuit: well, would *you* have known that Tauret was the hippopotamus goddess of women and childbirth? Thought not...

At the Tomb of Tutankhamen

www.nationalgeographic.com/egypt ★★★★

Arguably no event increased knowledge of the ancient Egyptians more than the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamen in 1923. Experience that event with this 'special edition' of the *National Geographic*, which details the discovery itself, from start to finish, in the words of reporter Maynard Owen Williams – and the excellent accompanying diagrams make it easier to understand not only the physics but the enormity of the event, evident in the text. Chilling stuff.

WORDS: SARAH WAKELY; PICTURE: KOBAL

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application web hosting

NT Domain Hosting
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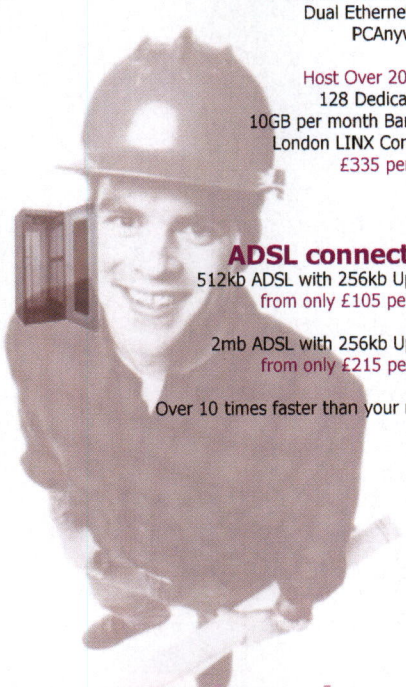

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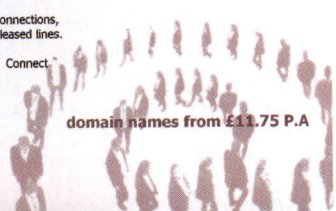

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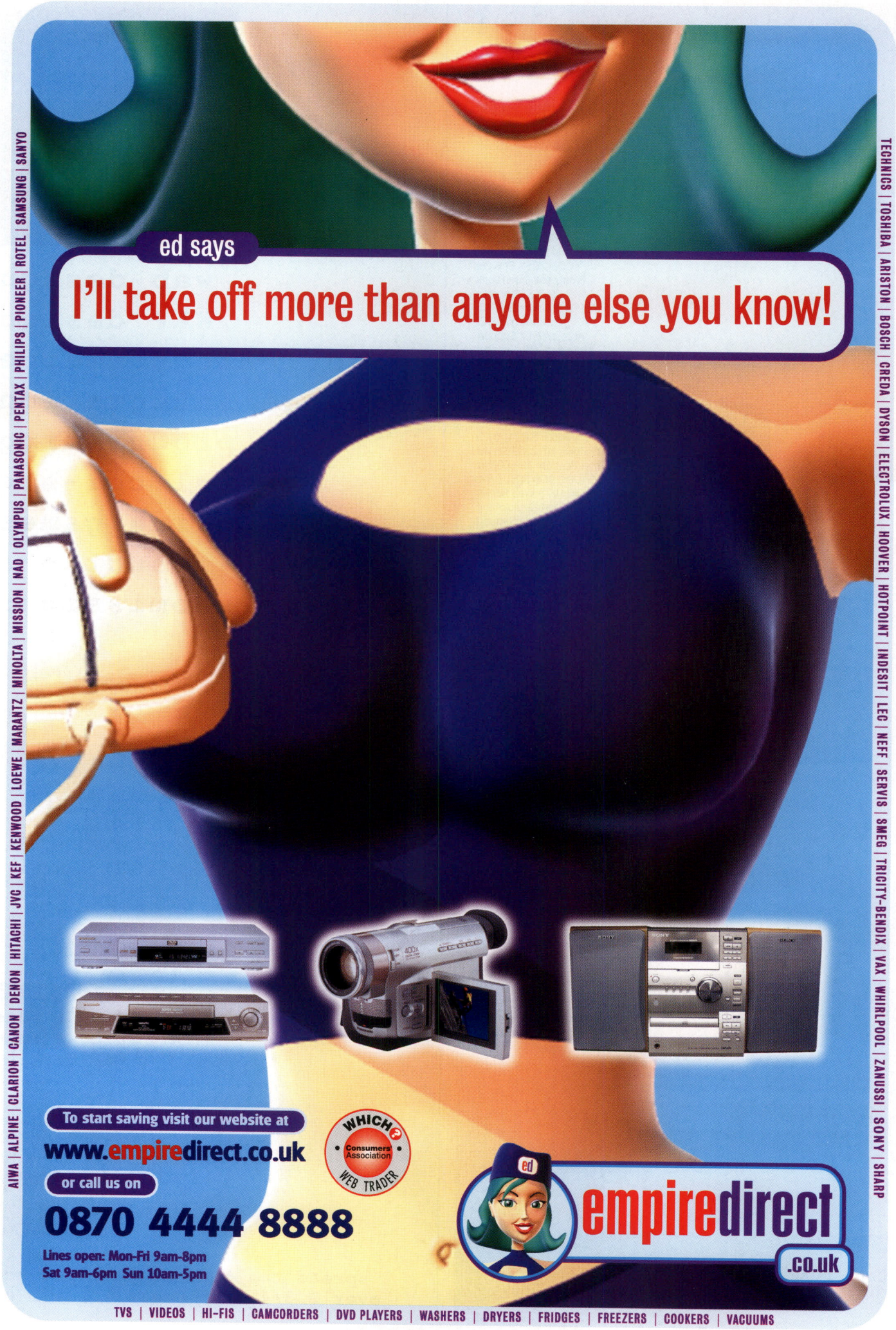
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Hard left at the tree!

Inspired by the thrills and spills of the Network Q rally? Here's how to use the Net to get into the sport

UK MotorSport Index

www.ukmotorsport.com ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

Whether the forth-coming Network Q rally causes you to suddenly gain a taste for motorsport, or if you're already a competitor, the UK Motorsport Index really should be marked down as your home page. A positive bible for everyone interested in the racing side of cars, the excellent drop-down menus will point you towards information on everything from rallysprint through to lawnmower racing. Even better, there are loads of links for products and services: so whether you need to hire a rally car, buy spares or purchase some of that oh-so-important insurance, you'll be able to get information on it here. Who ever said the Internet contained nothing of use?

Rally UK

www.rallyuk.8m.com ★★★★

OK, so you fancy tearing through forests at a million miles an hour with someone screaming directions at you from the passenger seat – do it legally and give rallying a shot. Britain is great for rallying: championships both big and small take place around the country, so there's sure to be something that will suit your standard. Check out all the latest information on both UK championships and the World championship at this excellent site.

Drive It All

www.driveitall.co.uk ★★★★

You've decided that you'd like to try your hand at rallying. But take note: just because you think you're a good road driver doesn't mean that you're the next Colin McRae, so test out your skills before investing by going on a course, such as those offered by Drive It All. Based in Oxfordshire, professional instructors will guide you through the basics before you progress onto more challenging stages.

Demon Tweeks

www.demon-tweeks.co.uk

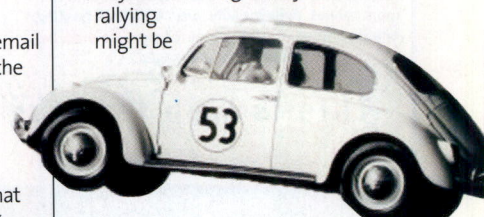
★★★★★

You aren't going to be allowed to race if you don't have the correct garb – a good race suit, fireproof underwear, a quality helmet and some boots are all essential pieces of kit. Go to one of the masters for your gear: Demon Tweeks is known throughout the world for the quality of its racewear, so take a look at this site which helpfully allows you to order all your racing kit online.

Rallysport.com

www.rallysport.com ★★★★

So you've had a go and you think rallying might be



BEST MOTORING SITES ★★★★★

where can I?

PLAN A JOURNEY?

buypower.vauxhall.co.uk/trafficnet
Visit before you start for a visual key to congestion on main UK roads.

www.mapblast.com
Tell it where you are, where you're going and this will get you there.

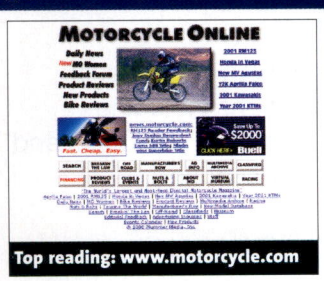
www.theaa.co.uk/ukroads/traffic.asp
The AA will advise you of any ongoing roadworks.

www.multimap.com
Brilliant interactive atlas of the UK.

FOLLOW MOTORSPORT?

www.autosport.com
World's best site for motorsport news, with live radio coverage.

www.itv-f1.com
ITV joins up with *F1 Racing* magazine to bring you Formula One action.



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www.motorcycle.com
'The world's largest and most read digital motorcycle magazine'.

www.webbikes.co.uk
The home of *On Two Wheels*.

www.biketrader.co.uk
Buy or sell your bike online.

www.motorbike-bob.com
New-ish site for motorcyclists, featuring chat and shopping.

JOIN A NEWSGROUP?

alt.autos.sport.rally The place to get late-breaking rallying news.

FIND A MAILING LIST?

For British car fanciers, send an email with 'info british-cars-digest' in the message to ***majordomo@autox.team.net***

GET CHATTING?

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WORDS: SARAH WAKELY; PICTURES: KOBAL, PA

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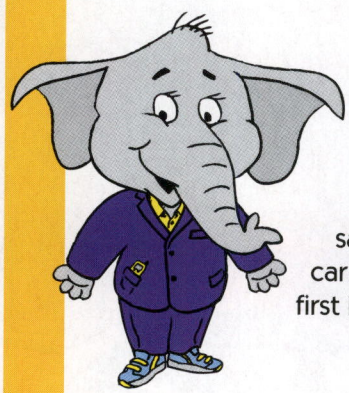

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Even with the best will in the world, you're likely to smash your rally car

for you. First, of course, you're going to need a motor (you won't get far without one, after all) so check out Rallysport.com which, through its Classifieds section, can help you locate a suitable rally car. There are loads available, but be warned – you might have to travel abroad to fetch it. But it'll be worth it when you've got your foot flat down on the floor...

Classic and Rally Services

www.cars-gb.com

★★★★

Even with the best will in the world, at some point you're more than likely to smash your rally car to smithereens against a tree, career up a grassy bank or end up in a river. So you want to be able to repair your motor ready for that all-important next stage. Classic and Rally Services will help you locate the parts that you might need, including seats, tyres – and even new suspension for that inevitable moment when you bottom out.

Rallyzone

www.rallyzone.co.uk

★★★★

Confused by all the UK rallying championships out there? Want to know the best car to buy to go rallying in? Then email this site and your query will be posted in the 'Letters' section: as the site points out, many of Rallyzone's readers 'are professionally involved in rallying and they may be able to help'. So whether it's a question about Sainz or sumps, be sure to post your query – you never know, you may just get it answered.

Richard Burns

www.richardburns.com ★★★★★

If you want to be the best you have to learn from the best, so check out the superb site of Britain's most successful rally driver of the moment, Richard Burns. Alongside the pictures there's loads of information about the car and reports of Burns' season so far – and the great man himself has been known to pop in and add stuff of interest occasionally. The site of his co-driver Robert Reid, at ***www.robert reid. co.uk***, also gives a great insight into the world of rallying.

Emagine Travel

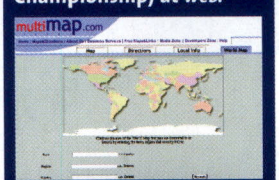
www.emagine-travel.co.uk ★★★

Finally, if you decide that you really can't take all the expense of rallying yourself, tour experts Emagine will transport you as a spectator to a World Rally Championship event, so can you watch Burns, McRae, Makinen *et al* as they show you exactly how it should be done. All the Emagine tour packages are listed here: simply take your pick, and you can book your trip online.

AND THEN THERE'S...

WHERE AM I?

Although chances are that you aren't going to be lost for two days in the Sahara on the Paris-Dakar rally (©Mark Thatcher), anyone deciding to take up rallying should make sure they are well prepared. Start by ensuring that your co-driver knows the route: for some excellent advice read Andrew Bargery (Justin Dale's co-driver in the British Rally Championship) at *web.*



***ukonline.co.uk/andrewbargery/codrive/body.htm*. It's a veritable feast of info; tips include 'Try to write your notes as neat as possible during the recce'. Finally, if the worst does happen, pray that your laptop is fully charged: there's always *www.multimap.com*.**

'I told you to brake, Tony, but you never listen...'

Take me home

Adoption agencies have moved onto the Web...

'Should be able to get a few quid for these'

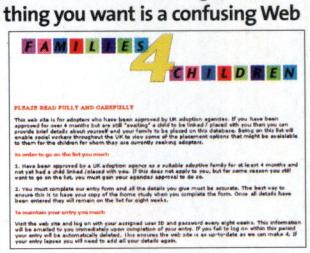
THE NET'S FAVOURITE

Families 4 Children

www.adoption.org.uk ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

If you want to adopt a child or two but aren't too good on this Internet malarkey, the last thing you want is a confusing Web site. Luckily the Adoption Information Line is one of the easiest sites on the Net to navigate, to the extent of arranging the voluminous information in a linear 'next page' style if you wish. The advice is clear and even-handed, neither pretending adoption is a bed of roses nor scaring potential parents off.



Haiti Adoption Program

precious.org/haiti/ ★★★★

If you're a practising Christian with money to burn, help orphaned children around the world find adoptive families through the Internet Adoption Photolisting. You can view children in the photo gallery, pick up an order form – and be told quite how dreadful conditions are in Haiti for 'God's people, just like you and me.'

Adoption-International

www.adoption-international.com ★★★

The Russian Adoption Facilitation Service was founded in 1991 and specialises in locating and facilitating international adoptions of infants, toddlers and older children from Eastern Europe. 'We believe that every family is unique and try to... meet each adoptive parent's needs through international adoption,' boasts the site.

BAAF

www.baaf.org.uk ★★★

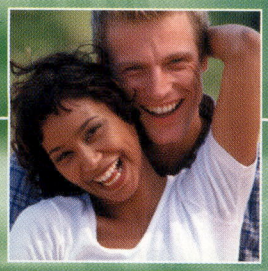
BAAF (British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering) is probably one of the best places to start if you're serious; as it says 'the BAAF encourages anyone who feels they may have something to offer a child to come forward'. The site links to all but one of the local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales, as well as voluntary adoption agencies throughout Great Britain.

Adopting a Cat

www.cats.org.uk/adopt.html ★★★

If you're not sure about whether to look after a human, perhaps you could start off slowly with a feline. Cats Protection's huge site includes a section devoted to rehousing homeless moggies, and if your heart isn't melted by the pictures of bedraggled kitty Katie's rebirth as a beautiful purring pussy, you're either callous or a dog.

WORDS: NOAM FRIEDLANDER; PICTURES: PA



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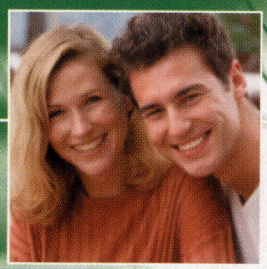

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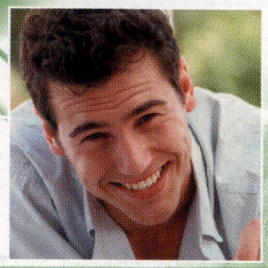

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The UK's largest global internet dating service

'Dad, it's flippin' freezing!'

Don't chill this winter – get online and insulate!

'That's another fine mess...' – sorry, wrong act

All About Home Winter Tips

www.allabouthome.com/tips/seasonal/winter.html ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

Go here and you'll be able to survive an Arctic winter in a cereal packet. Maybe not, but at least you can find out how to look after your garden, stop the plumbing from freezing up, stop your home from falling down, look after the floors and make sure you don't fall on those floors from a combination of carbon monoxide and lack of fresh air. It's American but that just adds drama, with sections like 'Weatherize Your Home!'. Tips are excellent: thaw out frozen pipes with an iron or hair dryer (but never a blowtorch). And you can't ignore the 'Don't Forget Your Feathered Friends This Winter' section.

DIY Fixit

www.diyfixit.co.uk ★★★★

Enough insulation information to protect you should the sun drop out of the sky – from attics to water tanks, it's here. There's also DIY information on the most obscure subjects such as electrics, plumbing, wallpapering, tips on how to cope with broken glass, and how to hang a door (as opposed to hang from a door, which is easy).

MN Dept of Public Service

www.dpsv.state.mn.us/docs/infocntr/fixit/fixit01.htm#t1l ★★★

Right, you bleeders, this is the bleedin' place for bleedin' radiators – an essential winter chore to control air and water levels, and all you need is a hexhead (like a screwdriver for radiators) to let out excess air. Check this site and you'll be ready to hiss off. Just don't do it when the heating's on or you'll end up in casualty!

B&Q

www.diy.com ★★★★

While B&Q's site has nothing specifically for the dark months, you can email its home and garden experts, who get back to you pretty quickly. No good if it's snowing in your lounge, but you can be prepared for regular winter perils. It also shows you where your nearest B&Q stores is, should you need to hang around in one to stay warm for an afternoon.

Sherwin-Williams

www.sherwinwilliams.com/DIY/interior/colorstyle/winteroo/default.asp ★★★

It's dark and cold out there, so don't go out! Instead, make it bright and warm inside your home with paint. Go here to discover the latest trends for winter. It's American but, once again, this just adds to the site, with great phrases such as 'Energize your rooms!'. There are also archived editions of the magazine *Color & Style* (including winter issues).

AND THEN THERE'S...

Build an igloo

If you still can't stop Jack Frost getting squatter's rights in your living room, you could always use Inuit intuition and sling together an igloo. Blow the ice off yer modem and go to *www.jps.net/prichins/igloos.htm* for invaluable tips (remember to always to get snow from north-facing slopes!); *www.benmeadows.com/ResourceLibrary/igloo.html* has pictures, but spoils the homely feel with its warning to 'make at least one airhole in the roof to avoid suffocation...'.

Inuit mazes: easy

BEST HOME & GARDEN SITES ★★★★★

where can I?

GO FOR PLUMBING?

www.plumbworld.co.uk

Put an end to leaking faucets with well-priced plumbing goods. Includes a guarantee and free shipping for most of the UK.

GET CLEANING TIPS?

www.howtocleananything.com

Just in case you make a mess while dabbling in DIY.

FIND INSPIRATION?

www.naturalhandyman.com

US site with tips and ideas. You can email to ***Subscribe@naturalhandyman.com*** to get on a mailing list offering home help and humour.

CHAT TO OTHERS WHO ARE DOING IT FOR THEMSELVES

www.doityourself.com

Reckons to be the leading Net community offering an ABC of DIY.

No 'How much?!' hell with QM4.com

www.remodelonline.com

For an A-to-Z of yankee-doodle-dandy-style home improvements.

FIND BARGAINS?

www.wilko.co.uk

For those on a budget you can't beat Wilko's cheap prices.

GET A QUOTE?

www.qm4.com

Stop paying too much for what needs doing! QuoteMe4 offers users free quotes for a whole range of services. And the suppliers remain in the dark about who you are until you decide to contact them. Sound!

KEEP MY GARDEN GROWING?

www.e-garden.co.uk

Gardening site with some humour, plus tips and news.

www2.garden.com

Log on to get garden tips that will make others green with envy.

www.dig-it.co.uk

This is the place for 'instant gardens' if you suddenly need a new one.

GET THE PERSONAL TOUCH?

www.jim-lawrence.co.uk

Specialises in curtain poles, door handles, wall lights, kitchen and bathroom fittings and table lamps using traditional blacksmith's skills.

WORDS: DAVID HURST; PICTURES: KOBAL

Even hologram juggling couldn't salvage *Spin City*'s ratings

Ghosts on the machine

Haunted? No need to call Ghostbusters anymore – just log on and get all the information you need

The Incident

www.the-void.dk/incident/intro.html

★★★★★

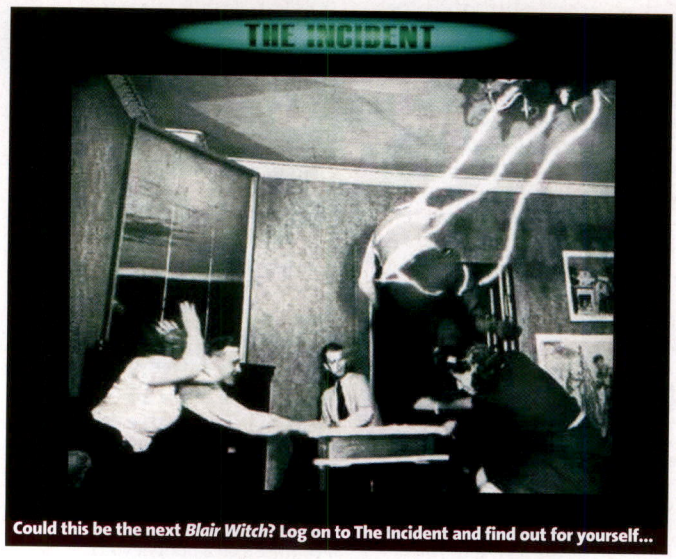
thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

Written in brilliant mock-solemn style, you might choose to view The Incident as conceptual art for the Internet age or a dire warning on the dangers of media manipulation. Whatever your eventual conclusion, these images of a ghostly onslaught are certainly extraordinary. Chairs levitate, ectoplasmic energies swirl and a brooding sense of menace permeates the site, all the more unsettling because, for a brief moment, you can't help but wonder if you have actually stumbled upon some dreadful secret. Thankfully, it's all fake... isn't it?

Kwaidan: Japanese Ghost Stories

www.harapan.co.jp/english/kwaidan/kwaidan_index.htm ★★★★

Ghosts are a worldwide phenomenon, but the Western stereotype of the creaking, cobweb-encrusted, vampire-bat infested mansion is hard to escape, even on the Web. What a relief, then, it is to find this charming selection of Japanese 'scary stories', or Kwaidan. Some are simple, traditional tales, but several intriguing personal experiences are offered by the Webmasters, Mire Uno and Chris Garcia. Definitely one to read with the lights down and a hot saké to hand.



Could this be the next *Blair Witch*? Log on to The Incident and find out for yourself...

How to Create Fake Photos of Ghosts

www.members.home.com/roddydouglas/ghost.html ★★★

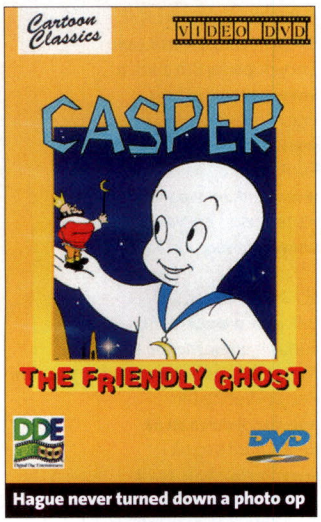
Pretty darn easily, apparently. Ghost images can be found online in their thousands, so this brave little site deserves a mention just for standing against the tide. Unfortunately, though the intention may have been to teach credulous souls to spot fakes, one has to wonder if most visitors are simply going to use it to brush up their technique.

Ghostweb

www.ghostweb.com ★★★

This is a simply enormous site that looks to be (eerily) groaning under the weight of its own success; the strain on bandwidth has necessitated the levying of a moderate fee to access many of their 7000 ghostly images. Not bad value actually, but if you really want to contribute to the coffers you can always take their course in the art of ghost hunting.

WORDS: JOHN GOSLING; PICTURE: KOBAL



Hague never turned down a photo op

Hollywood Hauntings
gothic.vei.net/hollywood/home.htm
★★★★

You would think that the prospect of movie immortality would suffice, but for many thespians the lure of the stage has apparently proven more powerful than death itself. Marilyn Monroe and Bela Lugosi may have signed up with the big agent in the sky but, as this gem of a site reveals, they share a ghostly spotlight with a veritable who's who of Hollywood greats.

The Chase Vault Homepage
www.geocities.com/Area51/Meteor/9175 ★★★★

There are things that go bump in the night and then there are the Chase family coffins, which have slid their way into supernatural folklore. This site tells the extremely creepy tale in fine style, explaining in detail how a number of heavy, lead coffins in a Barbados cemetery appeared to be moving about under their own – or perhaps something else's – power.

Richard Senate: Ghost Stalker
www.ghost-stalker.com ★

With that title, you'd think this was the homepage of a rather cheesy television show. Sadly, it's the real thing. Alas, Mr Senate's primary concern appears to be corporeal rather than incorporeal, as the thrust of the site is plainly monetary. Rest assured, you'll soon be fleeing in terror, a ghastly midi rendition of the funeral march ringing in your ears.

Ghosts of the Prairie
www.prairieghosts.com ★★★★

The evocatively entitled Ghosts of the Prairie contains a broad range of fascinating information – though somewhat to its detriment, such are the number of obscuring links to commercial portions of the site that you have to work awfully hard to pick the wheat from the chaff. However, despite the hard sell, the sterling content makes this a very worthy bookmark.

The Spectred Isles: A Guide to the Ghosts of England
freespace.virgin.net/martin.lightburn/ghost.html ★★★

An extremely handy ghostly gazetteer providing basic information on UK hauntings by geographic location. The clean and well-designed interface will allow you to quickly pinpoint spooky goings-on in your neck of the woods, although for those hankering for an up-close encounter of their own, the site really cries out for links to hotels and such.

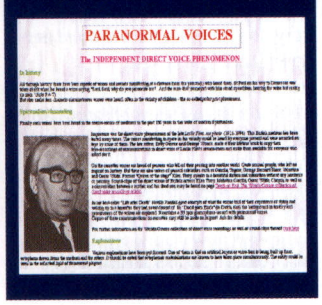
The Chinese Hopping Ghost
sr8.xoom.com/kellydee/index.htm ★★★

If you have ever watched in blank incomprehension the manic activities in a Hong Kong ghost movie, this site is definitely for you. Here you will learn precisely why a Hopping Ghost has to hop (it's not nice) and how to rid yourself of their unwelcome attentions. A very small site, but a solid source of unusual information.

AND THEN THERE'S...

Voices from beyond

If the strange sounds recorded by ghost hunters are truly voices from beyond the grave, then Electronic Voice Phenomena may be the most important breakthrough to have ever occurred in paraphysical history. For a good historical overview of the entire subject, try *www.xs4all.nl/~wichm/dirvoic3.html*. Naturally, the Internet comes into its own when it allows you to actually listen to some of these recordings. Ghostweb has a large selection at *photos2.ghostweb.com/evp.html* – although repeated listening to these crackling messages from 'the other side' will quite likely convince you that the reality of EVP is very much in the ear of the beholder.



BEST WEIRD SITES ★★★★★

where can I?

FIND MISSING PEOPLE?
www.peoplefinders.co.uk UK-based service that will track down old friends or relatives.
www.missingfriends.com Check if someone is looking for you here.

FIND LOST PROPERTY?
www.internetlostandfound.com Search for and post information on your lost property.
www.unclaimedbaggage.com/home.htm Take advantage of someone else's misfortune.

FIND WEIRD NEWS?
www.joeha.com/whiteboard A collection of stories to email your mates.
www.bbc.co.uk/weird The Beeb comes over all weird.
www.tabloid.net *National Enquirer*-style paper, which mixes truth and fiction.
members.aol.com/JACO70/wackynewz1.index.html Everything and anything strange, from celebrities to little green men.

FIND THE REAL X-FILES?
www.seti-inst.edu Meet the world's top ET-hunters here.

Get the scoop on spooks at *www.bbc.co.uk/weird*

www.ufomag.co.uk *UFO Mag* offers lots of thought-provoking debate.
foia.fbi.gov/unusual.htm Previously secret material from the FBI.
www.foia.ucia.gov More grainy, indistinct documents from the US Government's vaults.

LEARN ABOUT CULTS?
cti.itc.virginia.edu/~jkh8x/soc257/home.html The maddest cults.
www.mayhem.net/crime/cults.html Dangerous cults go over the edge.

FIND OUT ABOUT AREA 51?
www.ufomind.com/area51 A hefty resource on the secret base.
www.nauticom.net/users/ata/area51.html Excellent site with travel tips.
www.factnet.org Compelling newsletter dedicated to tracking tons of scary sects.

Ponder the, er, facts at Conspire.com

FIND A CONSPIRACY THEORY?
www.disinfo.com Conspiracies for the whole family.
www.conspire.com Sceptical tales with tongue placed firmly in cheek.

FIND A GHOST WALK ?
www.london-ghost-walk.co.uk/ A walk led by a genuine authority on haunted London, ghost author and researcher Richard Jones.
www.afallon.com/pages/walks.html Selection of walks within the UK.
clients.neworleans.com/ghosts/tours.html A city steeped in history offers a fine selection of ghostly tales.
www.norwich-ghost-walks.co.uk/main.htm Alternatively, tour terrifying Norwich.

STAY IN A HAUNTED HOTEL?
www.whereintheworld.co.uk/level1_pages/room_with_ghost/ff_haunted.htm List of haunted hotels in the US and UK.
www.destination-uk.com/haunted.htm Extensive list of haunted hotels in the UK.
www.travelscotland. co.uk/features/haunted_hotels.htm Interesting detail on haunted Scottish hotels.

FIND A NEWSGROUP?
alt.folklore.ghost-stories Share your experience of a ghostly encounter with other spooked individuals here.

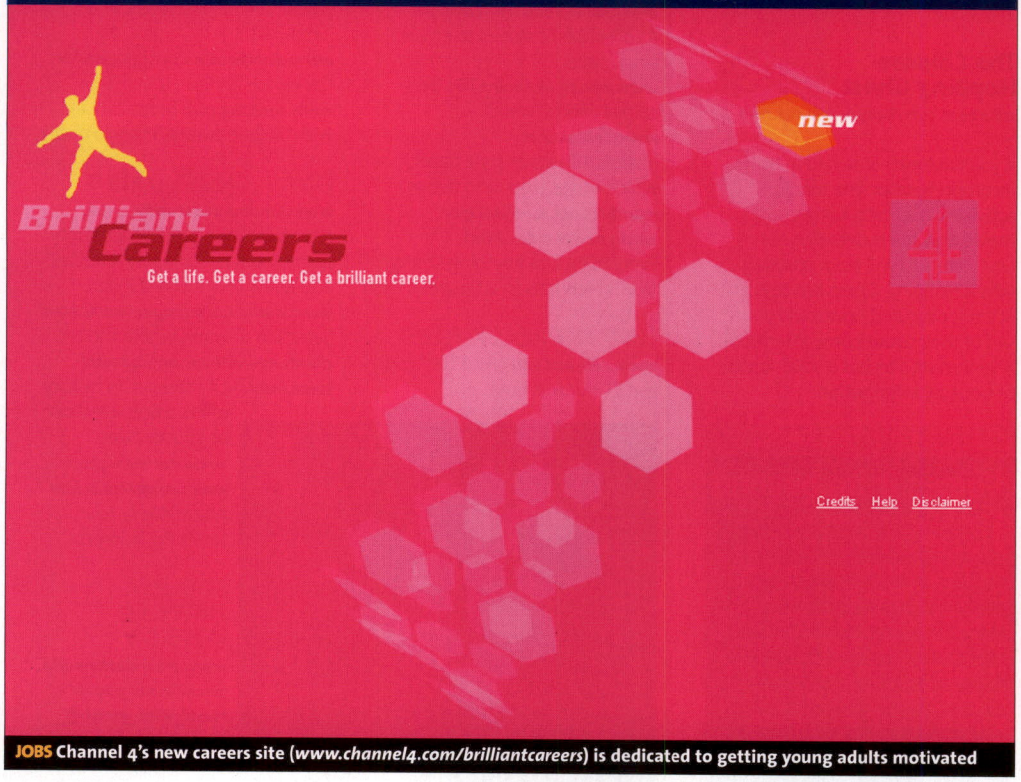
JOIN A MAILING LIST?
Meet fellow sleuths by sending an email marked 'info mystery-shopper' to ***majordomo@mLists.net***

GET CHATTING?
Got a good ghost story? Share it at ***www.chattownusa com/Avenues/Fun/chatghosts/index.html***.

Need to know

LIVE LIFE TO THE FULL – WITH THE INTERNET!

Surfing doesn't have to be a time-consuming nightmare if you use our guide to the best of the Web



JOBS Channel 4's new careers site (*www.channel4.com/brilliantcareers*) is dedicated to getting young adults motivated

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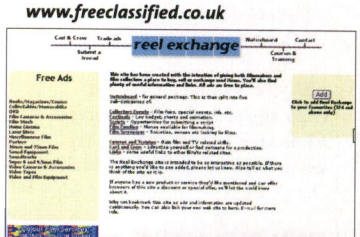

REEL EXCHANGE
www.reelexchange.co.uk
Making a film can be costly, so you'd be wise to check out Reel Exchange's film and video classifieds section, which focuses on second-hand equipment as well as training.

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Localads ***www.localads.net***
London's Classifieds
www.classifieds-free.net
LOOT ***www.loot.com***
netTRADER ***www.nettrader.co.uk***
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Real Player ***www.real.com***
Shareware ***www.download.com***
Shockwave ***www.shockwave.com***
ZDNet ***www.hotfiles.com***

ENCYCLOPEDIAS
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Encyclopedia Britannica
www.britannica.com
Encyclopedia.com
www.encyclopedia.com
Funkandwagnalls
www.funkandwagnalls.com
Hutchinson Encyclopedia
www.bt-ern.co.uk/helicon

FOOD & DRINK
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Foodoo ***www.foodoo.com***
Meals For You ***www.mealsforyou.com***
RecipeWeb.co.uk
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GAMES
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Future Games Network
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GameCenter ***www.gamecenter.com***
Gamers.com ***www.gamers.com***
GameSpot ***www.gamespot.com***
GameSpyder ***www.gamespyder.com***
GameStats ***www.gamestats.com***
MacGaming
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Nintendo ***www.nintendo.com***
PlayStation ***www.playstation.com***
Sega ***www.sega-europe.com***
Total Video Games
www.totalvideogames.com

GENEALOGY
British Ancestral Research
www.brit-a-r.demon.co.uk
British Heraldic Institute
www.kwtelecom.com/heraldry
Family Search ***www.familysearch.com***
Genealogy Research Source
www.genealogy.bookpub.net
Public Record Office
www.pro.gov.uk
Rootsweb ***www.rootsweb.com***

GOVERNMENT
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www.number-10.gov.uk
Arts Council ***www.artscouncil.org.uk***
British Monarchy ***www.royal.gov.uk***
Department for Culture, Media and Sport ***www.culture.gov.uk***
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Department of the Environment, Transport and Regions
www.detr.gov.uk
Ministry of Defence ***www.mod.uk***
Open.gov.uk ***www.open.gov.uk***
Scottish Parliament
www.scotland.gov.uk
Welsh Assembly ***www.wales.gov.uk***

The World
Australia ***www.fed.gov.au***
China ***www.gov.cn***

European Commission
europa.eu.int
France ***www.premier-ministre.gouv.fr***
Germany ***www.bundesregierung.de***
Russia ***www.gov.ru***
United Nations ***www.un.org***
United States ***www.whitehouse.gov***

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The Brompton Dental Clinic
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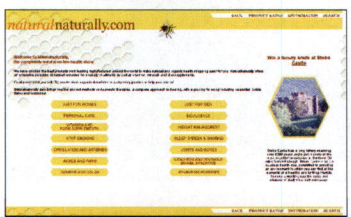
MedRef ***www.medscout.com***
Mental Health
www.mentalhealth.com
NetDoctor ***www.netdoctor.co.uk***
Patient ***www.patient.co.uk***



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Get a jump start on your upcoming New Year's resolution with this easy-to-navigate online health store, which features organic food, herbal remedies and supplements.

Support & information
Alcoholics Anonymous
www.alcoholics-anonymous.org
Alzheimer's Disease Society
www.alzheimers.org.uk
Babyzone ***www.babyzone.com***
Cancer Bacup
www.cancerbacup.org.uk
Centre For Online Addiction
netaddiction.com
Diabetes UK ***www.diabetic.org.uk***
Don't Smoke ***www.dontsmoke.com***
Fitness Online
www.fitnessonline.com
HIV/AIDS Information & Links
www.brad.ac.uk/staff/ijhodgson/hivlinks.htm
National Meningitis Trust
www.meningitis-trust.org.uk
ThinkNatural.com
www.thinknatural.com

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Property finders
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Global Resident
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Home Free Home
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Homepages ***www.homepages.co.uk***
Home Sale ***www.home-sale.co.uk***
HomeSight ***www.homesight.co.uk***
Home to Home
www.home-to-home.co.uk
HouseNet ***www.housenet.co.uk***
Internet Property Finder
www.propertyfinder.co.uk
Lets Direct ***www.letsdirect.co.uk***
Pavilions of Splendour
www.heritage.co.uk
Property Sight
www.property-sight.co.uk
Propwatch ***www.propwatch.com***
UK Property Gold
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HUMOUR
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JokeDepot ***www.jokedepot.com***
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Jongleurs ***www.jongleurs.com***
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South Park ***www.comedycentral.com***
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Uproar ***www.uproar.com***
Whatever ***www.whatever.uk.com***

JOBS
Employment Agencies
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Independent Appointments
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Job searches
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Wide Eyes ***www.wideyes.com***
Yelcom ***www.yelcom.com***

KIDS
0-8
Babynames.com
www.babynames.com
Babyzone ***www.babyzone.com***
Bedtime stories
www.home-office-mall.com/bedtime-story
Cartoon Network
www.cartoonnetwork.co.uk
CITV ***www.citv.co.uk***
FunSchool
www.funschool.com
Kidscom
www.kidscom.com/orakc/Mousers/mouse.html
Mother & Baby
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Sesame Street
www.sesamestreet.com/preschool

8 plus
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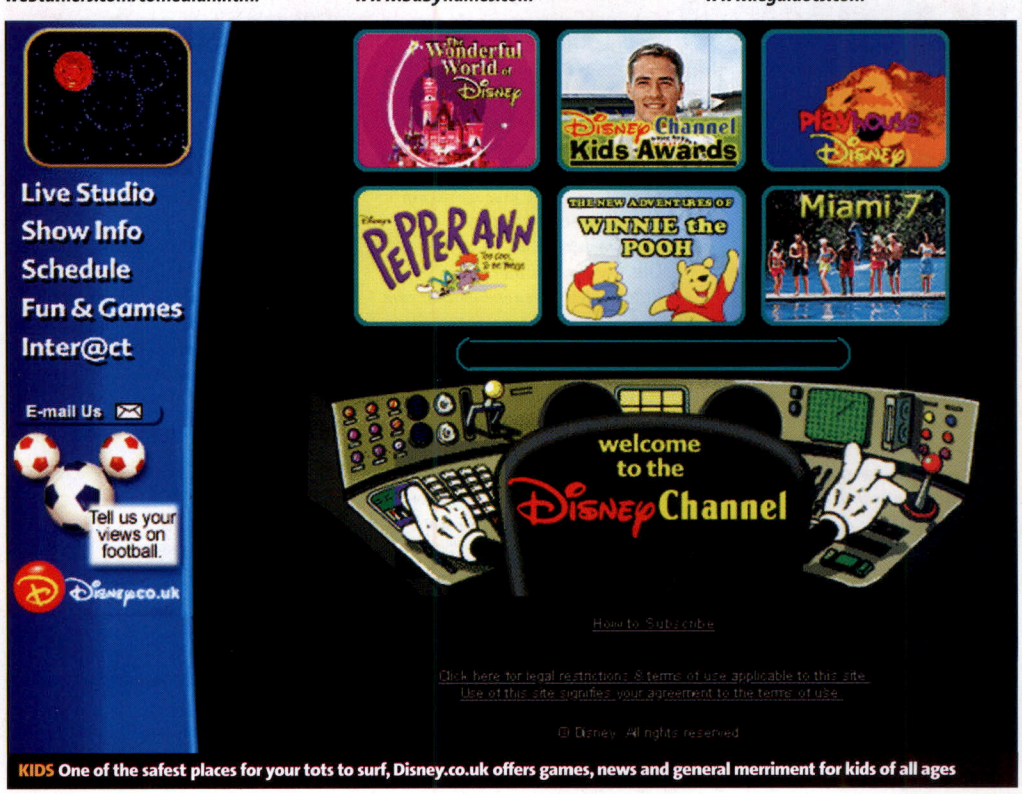

KIDS One of the safest places for your tots to surf, Disney.co.uk offers games, news and general merriment for kids of all ages

UK Law Online
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MAGAZINES
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Volvo ***www.volvocars.volvo.co.uk***

MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES
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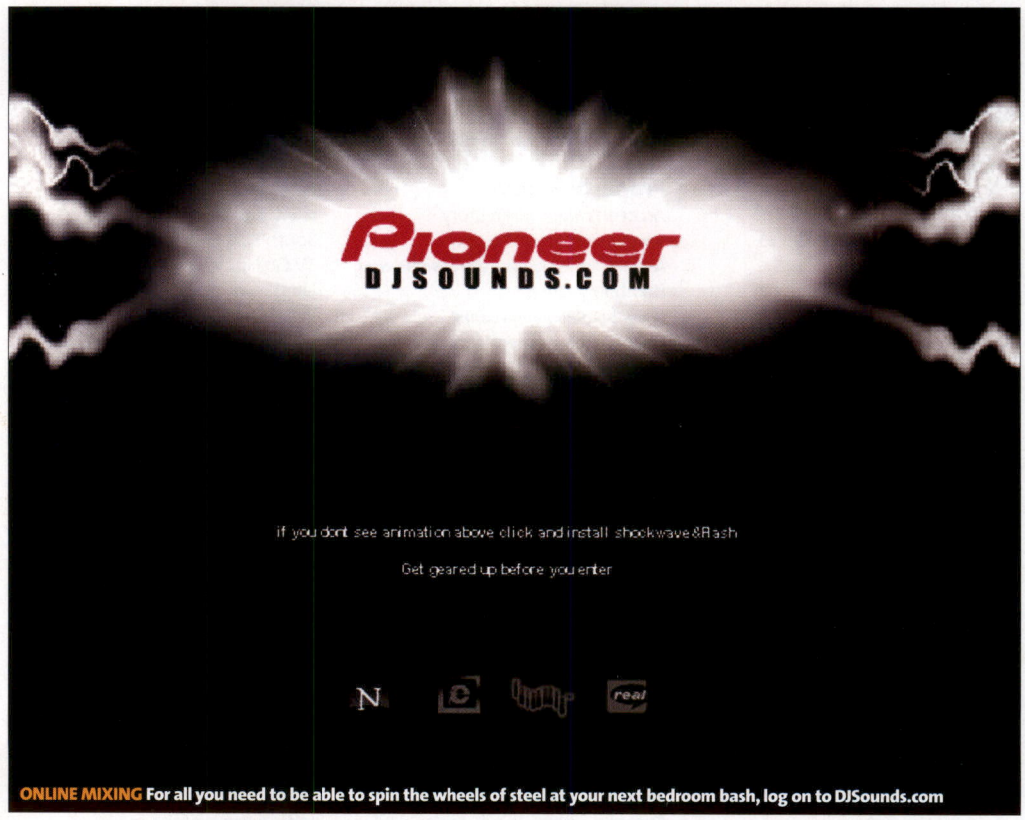
www.iwm.org.uk



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RADIO
Stations & directories
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Live Radio ***www.live-radio.net***
MIT List Of Radio Stations
wmbr.mit.edu/stations/list.html
Radio Now ***www.radionow.co.uk***
Spinner ***www.spinner.com***
StormLive ***www.stormlive.com***
TalkSport ***www.talksport.net***
Virgin Radio ***www.virginradio.co.uk***

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Mirago ***www.mirago.co.uk***
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eSwap **www.eswap.co.uk**
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QXL **www.qxl.com**
What Am I Bid?
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eDirectory **www.edirectory.co.uk**
Enterprise City
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IMRG **shops.imrg.org**
Inshop.co.uk **www.inshop.co.uk**
Internet Shopping
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ShopGuide
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Shopping UK
www.internetics.co.uk/shop
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Shops On The Net **www.sotn.com**
Shop Spy **www.shopspy.co.uk**
Taxi **www.mytaxi.co.uk**
TopUKWebsites
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UK Max
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Virtual Mall
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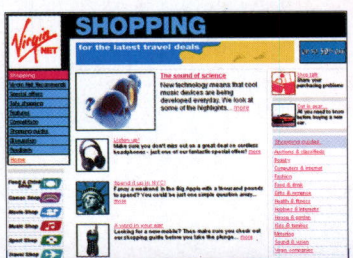
Wedding List Services
www.wedding.co.uk



VIRGIN NET – SHOPPING
www.virgin.net/shopping
Virgin's just-launched channel is a shopaholic's dream, featuring news, special offers, discounts, promotions and secure links to 500 shopping Web sites. Have your credit cards at the ready...

SPORT
FA Premiership clubs

Arsenal **www.arsenal.co.uk**
Aston Villa **www.astonvilla-fc.co.uk**
Bradford City
www.bradfordcityfc.co.uk
Charlton Athletic
www.charlton-athletic.co.uk
Chelsea **www.chelseafc.co.uk**
Coventry City **www.ccfc.co.uk**
Derby County **www.dcfc.co.uk**
Everton **www.evertonfc.com**
Ipswich Town **www.itfc.co.uk**
Leeds United **www.lufc.co.uk**
Leicester City **www.lcfc.co.uk**
Liverpool **www.liverpoolfc.net**
Manchester City **www.mcfc.co.uk**
Manchester Utd **www.manutd.com**
Middlesbrough **www.mfc.co.uk**
Newcastle United **www.nufc.co.uk**
Southampton
www.saintsfc.co.uk/index.htm
Sunderland
www.sunderland-afc.com
Tottenham Hotspur **www.spurs.co.uk**
Watford **www.watfordfc.com**
West Ham Utd **www.whufc.co.uk**

Sport A-Z

Athletics **www.nuff-respect.co.uk**
Cricket **www.cricket4.com**
Cycling **www.cycleweb.co.uk**
Formula One **www.itv-f1.com**
Fishing **www.anglersnet.co.uk**
Football **www.football365.com**
Golf **www.golfweb.com**
Hockey **www.fieldhockey.com**
Martial Arts
www.martial-arts-network.com
Motorsport **www.autosport.com**
Motorbike Racing
www.motograndprix.com
Racing **www.racingpost.co.uk**
Rugby League **www.rleague.com**
Rugby Union **www.scrum.com**
Skiing **www.complete-skier.com**
Snooker **www.snookernet.com**
Tennis **www.tennis.com**
Wrestling **www.wwf.com**

STYLE & FASHION
Main sites

BeautyLink **www.beautylink.com**
Charles Worthington
www.cwlondon.com
Cosmopolitan **www.cosmomag.com**
Defining Edge
www.definingedge.com
Fashion And Beauty Internet Association **www.fbia.com**
Fashionfile **www.fashionfile.com**
Fashion Mall **www.fashionmall.com**
FashionNet **www.fashion.net**
Haburi **www.haburi.co.uk**
Models.com **www.models.com**
Noel Hennessy
www.noelhennessy.com
Salonweb **www.salonweb.com**
Style Experts **www.stylexperts.com**
Vogue **www.vogue.com**

TELEVISION
Top shows

Big Breakfast
bigbreakfast.channel4.com
Brookside **www.brookie.com**
Coronation Street
www.coronationstreet.co.uk
EastEnders
www.bbc.co.uk/eastenders
Friends ***friends.warnerbros.com***
Hollyoaks **www.hollyoaks.com**
Neighbours **www.neighbours.com**
Jerry Springer **www.universalstudios.com/tv/jerryspringer**
Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?
www.phone-a-friend.com

TV companies

BBC **www.bbc.co.uk**
Channel Four **www.channel4.co.uk**
Channel Five **www.channel5.co.uk**
ITV **www.itv.co.uk**
ONdigital **www.ondigital.co.uk**
Sky **www.sky.co.uk**

TRAVEL
Airlines

Air Canada **www.aircanada.ca**
Air France **www.airfrance.com**
American Airlines **www.aa.com**
Britannia **www.britanniaairways.com**
BA **www.british-airways.com**
BM **www.iflybritishmidland.com**
Buzz **www.buzzaway.com**
Continental
www.flycontinental.com
Easy Jet **www.easyjet.com**
Go **www.go-fly.com**
Iberia **www.iberia.com**
KLM **www.klmuk.com**
Lufthansa **www.lufthansa.com**
Qantas **www.qantas.com.au**
Ryanair.com **www.ryanair.com**
United Airlines **www.ual.com**
Virgin Air **www.virgin-atlantic.com**

Destination guides

IRELAND
www.12travel.co.uk
Need a break, but don't have the time to take off? Then go to Ireland! 12Travel.co.uk offers flights, ferries, accomodation, car hire and tips on what to do when you're there.

Amsterdam **www.channels.nl**
Australia **australia-online.com**
Bargainholidays
www.bargainholidays.com
Caribbean **www.caribbean-travel.com**
Caribbean Islands
www.gopelican.com
Cheaperholidays
www.cheaperholidays.com
France **www.franceway.com**
Germany **www.germany-tourism.de**
Greece **www.areianet.gr/infoxenios**
India **www.indiagov.org**
Italy **www.travel.it**
Japan **www.jnto.go.jp**
Pack Your Bags
www.packyourbags.co.uk
Portugal **www.portugal-web.com**
Ski Club Of Great Britain
www.skiclub.co.uk
Spain **www.red2000.com**
UK **www.visitbritain.com**
US **www.go-unitedstates.com**

Ferries

Ferry Savers **www.ferrysavers.co.uk**
P&O **www.poef.com/poef/index.htm**
Travel Britain **www.travelbritain.com/UKPassengerFerries.html**

Rail travel

Euro Railways
www.eurorailways.com
Great Eastern Railway **www.ger.co.uk**
Great Western Trains
www.great-western-trains.co.uk
Railtrack **www.railtrack.co.uk**
Scotrail **www.scotrail.co.uk**
Trainline **www.thetrainline.com**
UK Public Transport Information
www.pti.org.uk
Virgin Trains **www.virgintrains.co.uk**

Babydata

Travel agents ★★★

Air tickets www.airtickets.co.uk
Bargain Holidays www.bargainholidays.co.uk
Cheap Flights www.cheapflights.com
Cheapflights www.cheapflights.co.uk
Expedia www.expedia.co.uk
Holiday Deals www.holidaydeals.com
Holiday Wizard
www.holidaywizard.co.uk
Internet Travel Services
www.itsnet.co.uk
Last Minute **www.lastminute.com**
Leisure Planet
www.leisureplanet.com
STA Travel **www.statravel.co.uk**
The First Resort
www.thefirstresort.com
Thomas Cook
www.thomascook.co.uk
Thomson
www.thomson-holidays.com
Trailfinders **www.trailfinder.com**
Travel Choice **www.travelchoice.co.uk**
Travelocity **www.travelocity.com**

WEBCAMS
Directories

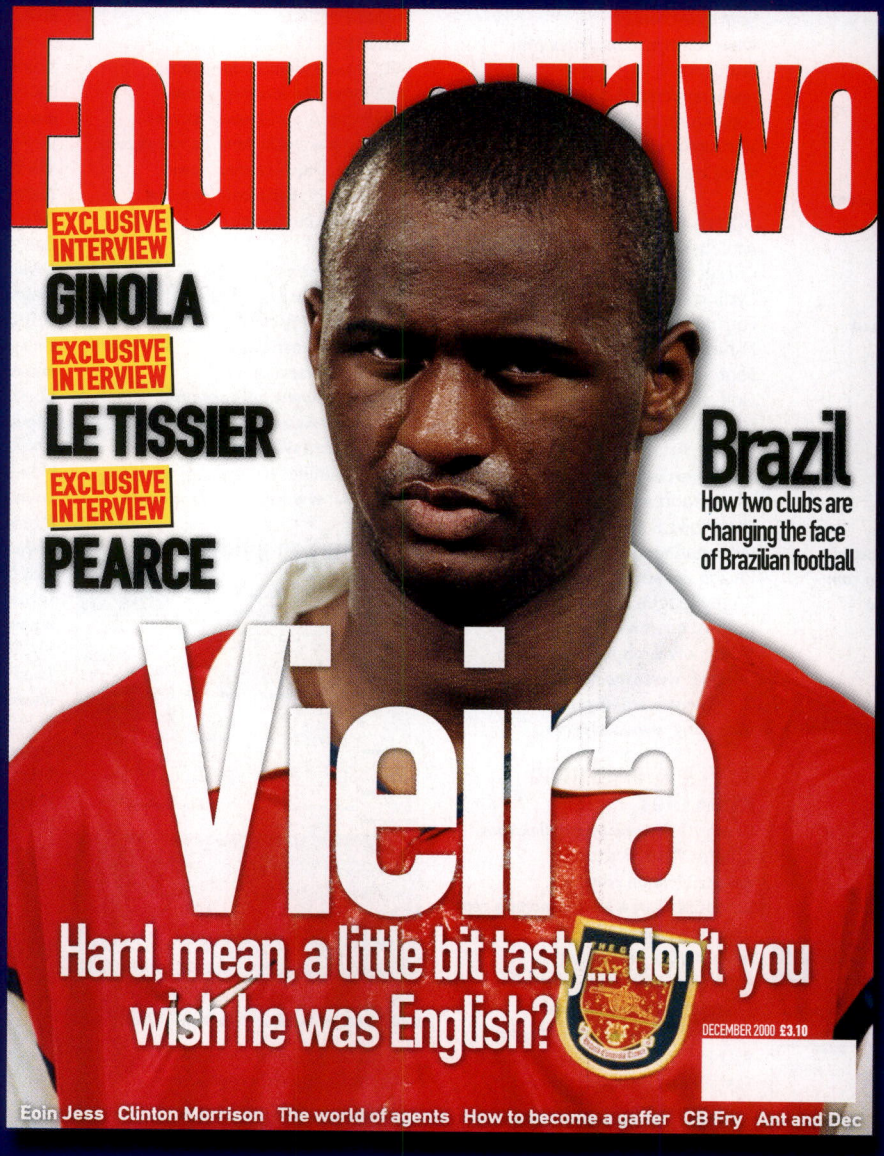
Allcam **www.allcam.com**
Camcity **www.camcity.com**
Digital Camera Network
www.dcn.com
Earthcam **www.earthcam.com**
Webcam Central
www.camcentral.com
WebCam World
www.webcamworld.com
Webviews **www.webviews.co.uk**

WEB CENSORS

Cybersnoop **www.pearlsw.com**
Cyber Patrol **www.cyberpatrol.com**
Net Nanny **www.netnanny.com**
Xcheck **www.xcheck.net**

WEB DIRECTORIES

About.com **www.about.com**
4anything **www.4anything.com**
AOL Netfind **www.aol.com/netfind**
Excite **www.excite.com**
Infoseek **infoseek.go.com**
Liszt (mailing lists) **www.liszt.com**
LookSmart **www.looksmart.com**
Open Directory **www.dmoz.org**
Thomson Directories
www.thomweb.co.uk
UK Plus **www.ukplus.co.uk**
WebCrawler **www.webcrawler.com**
Yahoo! **www.yahoo.com**
Yell **www.yell.co.uk**



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CHRISTMAS COUNTDOWN

Why Christmas shopping is a breeze on Freeserve

Searching the Internet

No.1 for the Internet
Where to find the best content on the Internet

Chat with Jackie Collins
The top-selling author goes online with Freeserve

Get your business on the Internet
With clearlybusiness.com, you'll be selling online in days

16 pages that will change the way you use the Net

Welcome

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www.freeserve.com

Welcome to Freeserve, the UK's No. 1 for the Internet. Whatever you want from the Internet, you can get it on Freeserve. Our content is second to none, covering all the topics that you could want to read about. Whether you like shopping, travel, chat or sport, you'll find all these and much, much more on Freeserve Today at *www.freeserve.com*. Freeserve is the Internet's leader for great content, but that's not all. Over 2 million people are currently online as members of the nation's most popular Internet Service Provider (ISP) and portal – they're all part of one big community who enjoy the many benefits of being a Freeserve member.

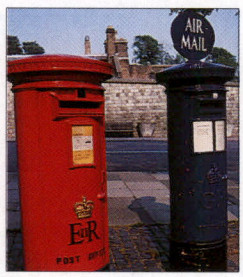
What you'll get from Freeserve

Free Internet calls

It's fair to say that everyone uses the Internet in different ways. Some people use the Internet at work or at college, others spend hours on the Internet at home. Still more will log on for a couple of minutes a few times a day. At Freeserve we offer you a choice of Internet call packages, putting you in control of your access charges. It works like this: No Ties Freeserve Time lets you pay as you use, charging a local rate per minute you stay online. Or there's Off Peak Freeserve Time, which gives you unmetered access from 6pm until 8am during the week and all day at weekends – for only £8.99 per month. See ***www.freeserve.com/time*** for more information.

Or for those who want even faster Internet access available at all times, there is FreeservePlus, the new Broadband service for both homes and businesses. FreeservePlus for home works on a 'flat-fee' basis of just £39.99 per month plus a one-off installation charge of £150. For more details, see ***www.freeserve.com/plus***.

Email



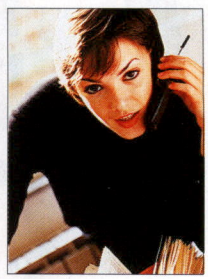
Imagine what it must be like to receive post at any time of the day or night, within seconds of when it was sent. Well, that's exactly how email works. And with Freeserve, you don't have to pay a penny. When you sign up, you'll get an unlimited number of free email addresses. Messages are free to send and receive; all you pay is the cost of the Internet connection call.

And now you have even more choice, thanks to FSmail, our Web-based email service. You can check it anywhere in the world – all you need is an Internet terminal! For more information, see ***www.fsmail.net***.

Communication options

With email, there's always the danger that you might need to read your messages when you aren't near a computer. Now that needn't be a problem – you can be notified of your email on your mobile phone, thanks to Freeserve Alerts, which converts your messages to SMS. Or, if you have a mobile Internet (WAP) phone, you can receive your messages in full.
www.freeserve.com/communications

Talking email



Finally, there's Speechmail. This clever option lets you access your email messages over the phone, without a computer. And as you would expect, there's no subscription charge for Freeserve members.

To access the service, simply sign up at the address below. You'll be given a phone number which you can use to access your mail. You can ring your number from any phone – including your mobile. So no matter how important the message, you won't need to sit in front of a computer screen.
www.freeserve.com/communications

Web space

Once you've started looking around the Internet, chances are that you'll be keen to build your own site. Well, now it's easy thanks to some great benefits you'll receive as a Freeserve member.

As a Freeserve member we'll give you a massive 15 Megs of free space in which to create your own Web site. You can make your site about absolutely anything that you

Freeserve: there's a channel for everyone

CHANNEL GUIDE

Some of the great channels available on Freeserve

Today

Freeserve has always striven to provide the best content on the Web, and the Today channel has been styled with an exciting mix of topical content and features to enjoy. Go there today!
www.freeserve.com

Auctions

The thrill of bidding for items at bargain prices is no longer confined to auction rooms. By going to FSauctions at ***www.fsauctions.co.uk***, you can peruse the wide variety of merchandise on offer and place your bid. It's up to you to decide how high to go!

like – it can be dedicated to your favourite pop star, football team or even yourself! And the wealth of free software on the Freeserve sign-up CD make it easy to get your site up and running.

So with help from Freeserve, you'll soon be at home on the Internet.

Great Content

At Freeserve we don't just strive to bring you free Web space, unlimited free email addresses and a choice of Internet access packages. We're also dedicated to bringing you the very best content on the Internet and collecting it all under one roof: on the Freeserve Today page at *www.freeserve.com*.

To make the most of Today, make it your homepage on the Web and check it every day. That way you'll get a fantastic digest of all the latest news, weather and sport just as it happens – and the opportunity to explore the events more thoroughly on the relevant channels, of which there are lots.

Freeserve for life

Freeserve isn't limited to hard news. Try the feature-packed Lifestyle channel, follow the stars with the Entertainment channel, plan a holiday with the Travel channel, or get talking on our Chat channel. If you have a small business, you shouldn't miss the Business channel. Or there are Sport, Learning and Money channels, as well as the women's channel at icircle.com.

Finally, our email newsletter will keep you up-to-date with all that's going on at Freeserve.

www.freeserve.com

Sign up online at www.freeserve.com or pick up the CD at Dixons, Currys, PC World or The Link. It's free.

Business

Whether you've got an established business or are a newcomer, Clearlybusiness.com, backed by both Freeserve and Barclays, can help. Get your business online in time for the Christmas rush!

Careers

You're wired, now get hired – not fired. The Careers channel lets you search databases of 70,000 jobs nationwide; you can apply online, or submit your CV and wait for employers in your area to come to you!

Chat

Our ever-popular chat service is a great hit. You can use our new 3D chat rooms to get around and explore virtual reality worlds, set up your own chatgroups, or chat to the stars with our new celeb chat section.

Entertainment

The latest film and music releases can all be found on the Freeserve Entertainment channel. From Mozart to Moby and Antonioni to *Antz*, it's all in Entertainment. And now you can listen to the radio over the Web as well!

Health

The Freeserve Health channel will help you stay in good order. The channel is packed full of information and advice on everything from herbal medicine through to the latest medical breakthroughs.

Image Bank:Retna

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www.freeserve.com

Helping teens through life

Music, life and chat are the order of the day on a new collaboration between Freeserve and Mykindaplace.com

As comedian Harry Enfield so amply demonstrates, it's difficult being a teenager – having to deal with personality changes as well as coping with school and friends. So teenagers everywhere will be pleased to learn of a new collaboration between Freeserve and Mykindaplace, which aims to provide young people everywhere with entertainment and support.

Most notable about the site is the way it's designed, clearly to attract teenagers and young people with bright colours and flashy graphics. It's still really easy to use though: all the buttons to the different areas of the site are clearly laid-out along the top of the homepage.

The thought that has gone into the site is very impressive – there has obviously been a lot of consideration as to what teenagers and young people are looking for in a Web site, and what will cater for their personal needs. There are a number of sections on the site covering all aspects of life – follow our guide to find out what you can expect to find in each of them.

Showbiz

Whether you're into Ricky Martin, George Clooney or Steps, you'll find all the latest gossip and information about what they're up to and where they've been spending their time right here. Be sure to make it your first stop if you want to be in the know about your favourite celebrity.

Teens now have their own place on Freeserve

Music

The latest reviews of new singles and albums, news of all the big star-studded parties and events, and interviews with some of the world's biggest stars can all be found in the Music section.

Doh!

This is the place to reveal all those cringe-worthy tales that you've never mentioned before. And if it really is too embarrassing, just read everyone else's – we guarantee you'll feel much better at the end of it!

Real Life

This is where you'll find information about everything to do with ordinary life – horoscopes, school, friends. There's sure to be something that's relevant to you.

Agony Aunt

Got a problem you need help with? Then send an email to this section and you might get it answered. Don't be embarrassed – it could change your life!

Shopping

This section is divided into lots of categories, so it's really easy to find what you're looking for at a bargain price, whether it's fashion, music, books or gifts for someone special.

Fashion

If you like to be up-to-date with the latest fashions or wouldn't be seen dead in anything other than Gaultier, then this is the section for you. Underwear, outerwear and shoes are all put under scrutiny here, so you can be sure to be with it!

And that's not all you'll find on the site. You can talk to other users in the chat rooms, send your friends ecards and put your point of view across by taking part in poll of the day.

Follow the link from the Freeserve Lifestyle channel or head for *www.freeserve.com/lifestyle/teens*.

CHANNEL GUIDE

Some of the great channels available on Freeserve

Learning

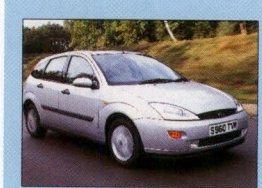
From SATS right through to A-level, Freeserve Learning is there to help you through your studies with an interactive learning environment to encourage learning skills. And now it's possible to take an online course, thanks to BlueU.com.

Lifestyle

The Lifestyle channel is an exclusive features magazine which brings you the latest lowdown on everything that matters, online and off. Whatever you're into, you'll enjoy Lifestyle.

Money

Freeserve will help you keep your finances healthy with expert advice. Whether you want savings tips, a mortgage or advice on choosing an ISA, you can keep your pocket full with Freeserve.

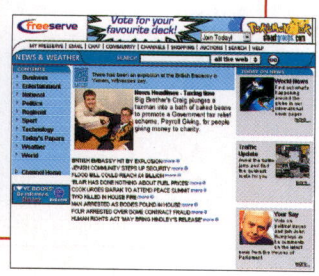


Motoring

Get on the road with the new Freeserve Motoring channel, which is your one-stop shop for everything car-related. You can buy your new car and arrange your insurance and finances online, with some great savings to be had.

News

Get tomorrow's papers today with this superb news service. You'll get all the latest UK and foreign stories, together with business news and a complete rundown of headlines as soon as they happen.



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www.freeserve.com

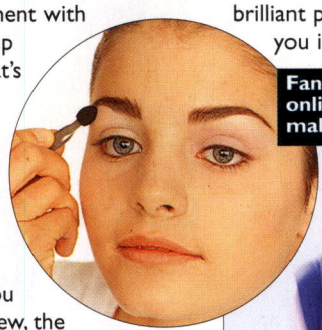
Making the most of yourself online

A new icircle.com channel is set to help women everywhere

Winter is now here and, as everyone will know, it's very difficult to stay looking your best in all the wind, snow and rain. So you'll be glad to hear that icircle.com health and new beauty channels are there to help you look your best and stay in tip-top health.

The icircle.com Beauty channel has recently been launched, and aims to provide women with the knowledge and information to make the most of themselves. Edited by Yvonne Covell, former Deputy Editor of *Marie Claire Health and Beauty*, the channel offers a unique combination of interactive beauty content and opportunities to shop for top beauty products online.

If you're unsure which colours and products will suit your skin tone, head for the Changes Live Beauty Studio and the unique 'try before you buy' interactive tool: simply scan in your own picture – or choose a model that's closest to your colouring – then experiment with different hair and make-up styles to find the one that's exactly right for you.



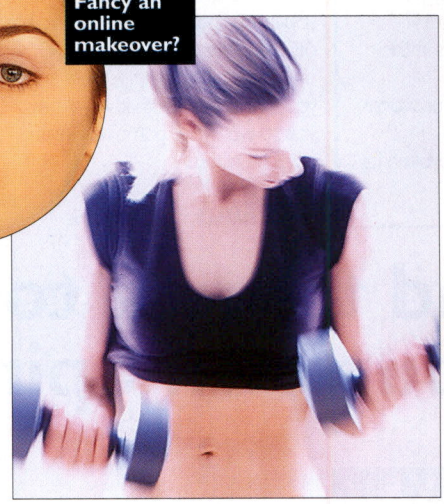
Whilst you're on the site you can read up on all the latest trends from the world of beauty, written by top beauty writers and leading industry names. And if you fancy trying something new, the monthly new product round-up will bring you all the latest information.

If you see something you fancy, head for the beauty shopping area for great prices and discounts.

You might still want to know more, so be sure to head for the 'Ask an Expert' section. Whether you want to beat bad hair days, solve a make-up dilemma, find the right perfume or seek advice on products, you can ask the panel of experts – which includes a top make-up artist, hairdresser and skin-care consultant – for advice. And our experts regularly appear on the site for hour-long live chats.

Finally, you can share your experiences and views of the site in the thriving community area – this is the place to swap tips, share moans and recommend good buys.

Are you looking to get in shape before Christmas? Then get fit with icircle.com's brilliant personal trainer, which will help you identify a workout programme that is best suited to achieving your own personal fitness needs – whether you need aerobics to help you reduce your weight, or yoga to de-stress and gently tone your body.



Fancy an online makeover?

This great new facility is devised by the icircle.com fitness expert and athlete, Jane Wake, who runs her own personal training company, and it takes the form of a quiz. In part one you'll be working towards finding out your 'core programme', which will give you an outline of the minimum amount of training you need to follow each week to hit your target. In part two, you'll be provided with a fitness plan specifically tailored to help you meet your own goal.

Finally, there's a section on the secret to longer youth! It's the most seductive of promises – the chance to preserve youthful energy, smooth skin and a healthy body for years longer than previous generations managed. So for all your beauty needs, be sure to visit icircle.com this month!

www.icircle.com

icircle.com

Property

Everything you'll need to look after your home and garden is on the Freeserve Property channel, from maintenance, to advice on how to make moving house easier!

Shopping

The Freeserve Shopping channel can provide flowers or food, a car or a computer. Look out for great deals and savings from SHOP@freeserve and now the new Marketplace retailers. And remember, Freeserve can take the strain out of your Christmas shopping – check out our feature on page 8.

Sports

Whatever your sport, you'll find it on Freeserve. Football, tennis, cricket, rugby, motorsport, golf; you can get the results and follow your heroes on the Sports channel.

Travel

Click on the Freeserve Travel channel for instant access to a database of 70,000 flights and holidays worldwide. There are always sensational last-minute deals on offer. Check out our best deals for Christmas and New Year getaways.

Women

Web women need look no further than the Freeserve women's channel, icircle.com, for the latest features, information and advice.

Retna; PA; Image Bank; Autocar

powered by freeserve www.freeserve.com

A place to debate

Freeserve Forums allow more and more people to have their say on the latest topics of the day

After the success of Freeserve Chat, the UK's No. 1 for the Internet is now bringing even more people together thanks to a new Forums section. Based within the Communities channel at *www.freeserve.com/communities*, Freeserve Forums is a great new way to share your opinions with other people.

When you go to the Forums section of the Communities channel you will see a list of the topics that are being discussed at that moment. You can join in with any of these, or suggest your own if something you want to say is not covered. You'll notice that the subjects covered are very topical, and they are updated all the time as stories break. So there's bound to be something that you'll have an opinion on! There are a whole range of subjects that are covered, so you could find anything from football right through to politics.

Below are some topics that have been discussed on Forums

- Will science enable us to live forever – and would you want to?
- Are replica shirts a rip-off?
- Would you have cosmetic surgery?
- Are car prices in the UK too high?
- What was your worst ever present?
- Has Labour broken its promise?

Once you've decided on a topic that you'd like to talk about, simply click on it and you'll see all the current messages. Read through what everyone has said in their messages so you don't repeat another person's comments. Then, when you feel ready to add your opinion, click on 'Reply'. Type your message in the box and click on 'Post'. Before you know it, your message will be posted for others to comment on! Click 'Refresh' to see it.

If, on the other hand, you'd rather suggest your own topic, email *forums@freeserve.com* with your idea.

There's even protection for you if you find someone's posting offensive messages – simply click on 'Complain about this post' and you'll get a box up that will allow you to type your complaint in and it will be noted.

See *www.freeserve.com/communities* for more details.

There's bound to be a topic that you'll have your own opinion on

NEW ON FREESERVE

Check out some of our great new features

Free Mobile Internet Phones

Are you tempted by Mobile Internet Phones? If so, read on.

All you have to do is simply apply and get accepted for a marbles card before 22 November and Freeserve, in conjunction with marbles, will give you a load of goodies absolutely free. You'll get a Siemens C35 mobile, which is a state-of-the-art phone, allowing you access to Freeserve, the Internet and send and receive emails. Not only is it small, but it's also very light at just 110 grams. As an added bonus, you'll also get a Phillips C12 Pay As You Go phone, which you can keep for yourself or give to a loved one to keep in touch!

Finally, as a special benefit for marbles cardholders, once you've signed up for a year's airtime contract with BT Cellnet and been connected for three months, you'll receive a £50 cheque back.

With the marbles card you will, of course, get a safe shopping promise, an interest rate of just 4.5 percent, and no annual fee!

For more details or to apply for your card and free gifts, see *www.fscard.co.uk/mobileinternet*.

Give a great gift this Christmas

What on earth do you get the man or woman who seems to have everything already? There's always someone for whom it's difficult to find a Christmas gift for.

Why not use the Freeserve virtual gift-giving service, IT3C? Simply go to the site at the address below and take your pick of presents. There's a variety of virtual gifts that can be sent, under a number of headings – you could send a cleaner to a messy acquaintance, a sunflower, a big hug, a calculator or even two Stealth bombers! The choice is yours.

Once you've decided exactly what free virtual present you'd like to send and who is to receive it, simply enter their email address and it'll be on it's way. IT3C will keep you informed of its progress in case something goes wrong – after all, Stealth bombers are very desirable items...

www.freeserve.com/entertainment

Your online Christmas presence

It's a great time to get your business online...

With over 50 percent of UK businesses now online and a projected growth of e-commerce to hit over £250bn within 4 years, it is no longer a question of 'Should I put my business on the Net?' but 'How should I develop my online presence?'. And with Christmas looming – Clearlybusiness.com can get your business online, ready to take advantage of the surge in Christmas and New Year shoppers. Clearlybusiness.com Business Website Solutions will make sure you not only find the most appropriate online solution for your business, but will put you in control to build and maintain your own Web site, maximising its true potential.

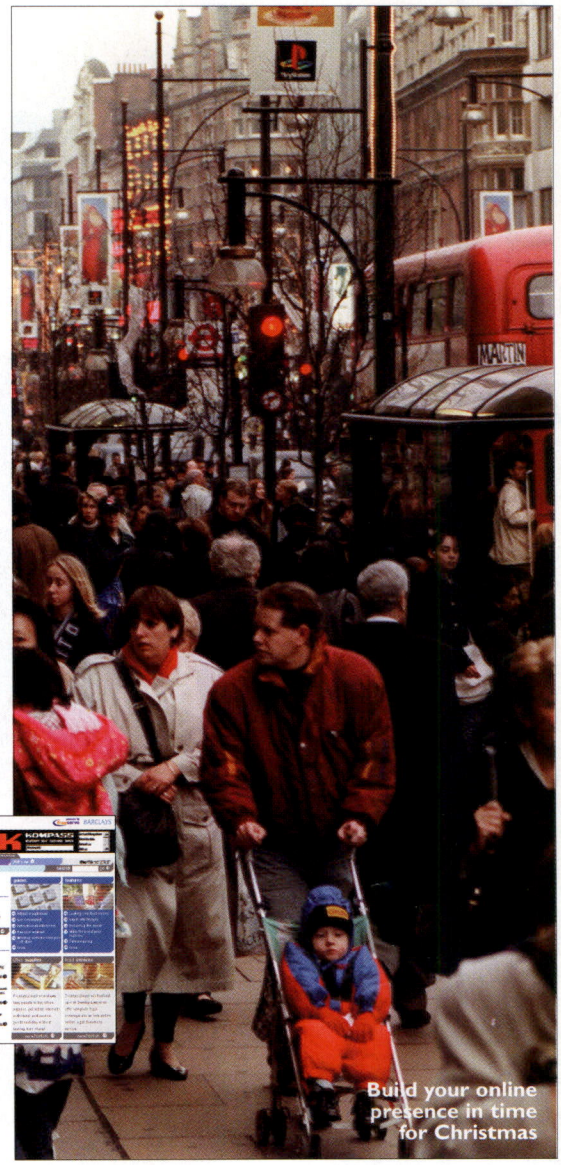
Clearlybusiness.com is the new small business portal which provides a complete online resource of information, tools, advice and commerce to start up and run a successful small business. Backed by Freeserve and Barclays, the site also provides simple but comprehensive packages to get your business online. There are three packages to choose from to suit your individual needs.

Clearlybusiness Internet Retailer helps you build and manage your own e-commerce store on Freeserve. Easy and simple to set up, fully supported with the highest level of tools, features and consumer security we will put your store live on the Freeserve Marketplace shopping mall, ready for Christmas – easily accessible to all Freeserve's visitors.

Whether your company offers a service or offers a range of products, our Business Website solution will get your company brochure/catalogue in front of the millions of people currently using the Internet, for less than £1 per day.

With up to 30 pages and 50 designs to customise, our Business Website solution is secure and suitable for both business and consumer markets, and upgradeable to add e-commerce as your business grows.

We will help you at every stage of the process, so you are not alone. See ***www.clearlybusiness.com/websitesolutions*** and start today!



PA; Retna

Get a share in the market

The recently-launched online trading site StockAcademy has grown further, with a brand-new telephone trading facility. The new service will offer users most trading utilities available with the online service.

StockAcademy is simple. While there are lots of specialist terms in share trading which can be bewildering to the beginner, StockAcademy aims to make trading easier and less complicated.

StockAcademy allows users to take control of their investment opportunities by offering online educational content on how to trade in shares. The clear tutorials cover all you need to know about the stock market, from 'What is a share?' to 'The limitations of value investing'.

Users are also kept up-to-date with all the latest shares news, thanks to easy access to information from UK-iNvest and Standard and Poors news feed.

www.stockacademy.com

Freeserve is an Appointed Representative of GlobenetDirect.com Limited. StockAcademy is a trading name of GlobenetDirect .com Limited, which is regulated by SFA and a member of the LSE. The price or value of investments can fluctuate. StockAcademy services may not be suitable for everyone, if in doubt, seek expert advice.

Bargains galore

From this month you'll be able to bag some even better quality presents for all the family, at great prices, when you visit FSauctions, the Freeserve Auctions channel.

For the men in your life, why not bid for high quality items such as videos, DVDs, car CD players, MP3s or even a PC? Or for the man who already has everything there are days out including a Ferrari Driving course.

For the children, we've thousands of soft toys including Winnie the Pooh and the rest of his Disney friends, as well as toys, bikes, computer games and lots, lots more.

And finally for the ladies, keep your eyes open on our jewellery, fragrance and watch offers. We've also got plenty of hot offers in our Home and Garden categories too, but ask yourself, is a new appliance the best present to give? You decide!

www.fsauctions.co.uk

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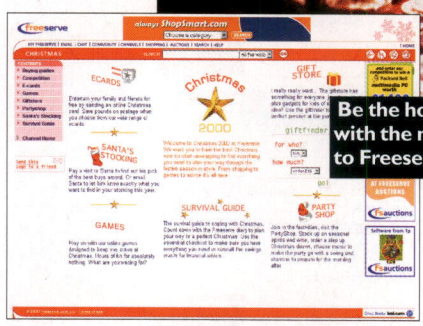
www.freeserve.com

The countdown

Helen Loveless, Freeserve Shopping Editor, has all those Christmas present problems well sorted

As the saying goes, Christmas comes but once a year – but there still never seems to be enough time to get everything you need. If, like most of us, the initial excitement at having a genuine excuse to hit the shops has worn off (full-on confrontation with desperate shoppers, huge queues and sore feet may not be your thing, after all) then the Freeserve Shopping channel at ***www.freeserve.com/shopping*** could be the answer.

From the comfort of your own sofa, in your own time, or your employer's (depending how flexible they are, or how cunning you are), the Internet is becoming an increasingly attractive option for frustrated consumers everywhere. If you are fed up with frantic, last-minute shopping excursions, the Shopping channel can help you plan your way to a more relaxed and successful Christmas. You can stock up on fine wines, spirits and beer, make sure you have all the food you need for serious over-indulging and take advantage of the range of vitamins, supplements and painkillers to ease that morning after. And all without moving from your chair!



Be the host or hostess with the most-ess thanks to Freeserve Shopping

Tell me what you want, what you really, really want...

The sheer choice of merchandise out there can be intimidating, to say the least. If you are blessed with children then no doubt you are already armed with extensive lists of toys, games and other must-haves. But for many of us, deciding what to buy for friends and relatives can be a torturous experience, with no guarantee that your carefully chosen gift won't end up gathering dust in the back of the cupboard. Even if you have an idea of the sort of gift that would go down well, the bewildering choice of books, toys and other enticing-looking items can leave you confused and tempted to take the easy option of a gift voucher.

To make your life easier, the Shopping channel has compiled a range of buying guides which should cut down the time you spend trying to decide on the perfect gift, and where to get it. Take a look at the book-buying guide for advice on current trends and the books tipped to become big this season.

The Editor's Pick section has reviews of our favourite new books and where to buy them. If books don't feature on your shopping list but you still want help in choosing a gift, we have buying guides for electrical equipment, movies, music, toys, gadgets and video games – whichever way you look at it, you're spoilt for choice.

Or treat yourself

Of course, it's the giving, not the receiving, that's important – or so they say. If you quite like receiving gifts, too, then the Shopping channel competition should suit you down to the ground. In the run-up to Christmas, visitors to the site will have the chance to win prizes worth hundreds of pounds on a daily basis, including a year's supply of beauty products, golfing equipment, the top 30 albums or hundreds of pounds to spend on children's toys. So you could save yourself the bother of any Christmas shopping trips – virtual or otherwise.

Christmas is the favourite time of year for spend-aholics. It is the perfect time to splash out with a clear conscience. After all, what can be more selfless than spending your hard-earned cash on gifts for friends and relatives? On the other hand, you may view the season with more trepidation if, like most of us, you are still paying off last year's debts.

So in the interests of giving everyone exactly what they want at a price which suits them, the Shopping channel Giftstore (as well as having just about everything you could think of) has a Giftfinder to help you search for the perfect present for him, for her, for children and for presents within a set price range. You can splash out in style or take the economical route – the low overheads incurred by retailers trading on the Internet mean the cliché about getting more for your money actually is true!

Retailers galore for perfect pressies

Other benefits of Internet Christmas shopping include the range of retailers it gives you access to, without the need to traipse from one end of the country to another just to get your hands on the latest must-have toy of the year.

If you have kids, then eToys will be an absolute godsend; bookworms are more than catered for by BOL; and food fanatics can head for Clearwater Hampers or stock up their freezer with an online visit to Iceland.

Just to save you even more time – and provide you with another window in your Christmas diary to squeeze in another vital party, we have a range of virtual Christmas cards – ecards – which you can send to friends, family, employees and pretty much anyone else you know. Think of the money you could save on postage – all the more to spend in the sales!

Finally, if you decide to throw a party, don't forget you can get everything you need online at Freeserve Shopping. The Partyshop will deliver all the ingredients for a successful social shindig, from balloons to wine to music.

So if you want to plan your way to your best Christmas in a few easy steps, pop down to the Freeserve Shopping channel!

www.freeserve.com/shopping

begins

Bid for a Xmas bargain

As well as shopping from your sofa, why not get your Christmas presents at bargain prices too? With a record number of listings at the new-look Freeserve Auctions channel, FSauctions (which is growing every day), it's the perfect place for more unusual presents at great prices.

A quick and simple way to search for goodies is to click on a category list and you'll get an idea of what's on offer, from art and antiques to motoring and entertainment. You'll find top brands and top quality goods which are all handpicked by our merchants who specialise in everything from PCs and software, to fashion and luxury jewellery. For a really unique gift, however, check out the Collectors' Arcade.

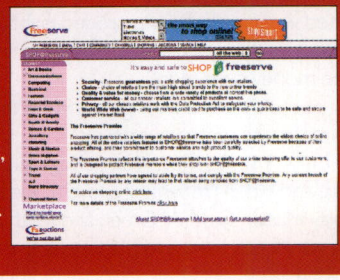
To save you even more, we've now added a new type of auction to our list: AutoMarkdown. This means that the price falls over a set period of time – basically, the longer you wait to place your bid, the lower the price will go, but the trick is knowing when to bid before the item sells out! If you would like to see these auctions in action, take a look at some of our merchants, such as DJ Cycles for a range of mountain bikes.

If you can't find what you are looking for, let our auction agents know. As soon as it's on our site we'll email you to let you know. It's just another great way to help you shop this Christmas!

For more details see *www.fsauctions.co.uk*.

The Freeserve Promise

If you're yet to make your first online purchase, we understand that you may be a little wary. This is why we have the Freeserve Promise, which states that all online retailers featured in SHOP@Freeserve have been carefully selected because of their product offering, and their commitment to customer service and high-quality products. You can find out more about our shopping guarantee, along with general advice about shopping online at *www.freeserve.com/shopping/promise.htm*. We also have the Freeserve Marbles card, which guarantees users security against fraud when buying goods on the Internet. For more info, go to *www.fscard.co.uk*.



Pictures: Corbis, Kobal

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Talking to the stars

Take the chance to ask a celebrity what you've always wanted to, with the Freeserve Chat channel!

Once you've been bitten by the Chat bug, you'll find it's difficult to stop yourself logging on frequently to see who is online at the same time. But now you could be chatting to someone famous, thanks to the revised Freeserve Chat area! During the month of November you can post your questions to a number of top celebrities.

Those who visited Freeserve chat in October would have come across a very famous face – best-selling novelist Jackie Collins dropped in twice to talk to Freeserve users! During her time on Freeserve she chatted about everything from her new book to French and Saunders – and she came back again because she enjoyed the first chat so much!

Below are the highlights from the two chats, which took place on Friday 6 October and Thursday 12 October. Jackie had just brought out a brand-new blockbuster, *Lethal Seduction*.

Freeserve moderator: Hello and welcome to our live chat with Jackie Collins. With booksales of over 200 million worldwide, Jackie has got to be one of the planet's most popular authors – a living legend. Her new book is called 'Lethal Seduction'. Let's have the first question…

Cook: What's it like being famous? Do you get a lot of time to spend with your family and friends?

Jackie Collins: Yes I do; I make sure that I make time to be with my family and friends and they are a source of inspiration and tell me everything!

Mads: What made you sit down and write your first book?

JC: Writing has always been my passion, I love what I do and will never give it up! I first started writing when I was around eight and I sold stories to my schoolmates and started to make money even then!

Ginger: Is there anything or anyone that inspires you to write your novels?

JC: Music inspires me… I am a huge fan of soul music and when I'm writing a love scene I love to play Marvin Gaye, Al Green and Keith Sweat, very, very loud. I also find Madonna's lyrics inspiring.

Sandy: Have you ever based one of your characters on yourself?

JC: Lucky Santangelo is my alter ego. She's such an interesting woman, I would love to be her in another life.

Lorraine: Could you tell me if there will be any more books about Lucky? Also, do you base the characters in your books on real people?

JC: Lucky Santangelo has been a wonderful character to write about. I have now written five books about her and two mini-series for television. She WILL be back, I'm not sure what she'll do next but you can bet it will be something outrageous and exciting. Yes I do base my characters on real people but I mix them up so you have to play the guessing game!

Karen W: How do you come up with ideas for your characters and plots?

JC: The plots are all around us – everytime I pick up a newspaper there is a little line there somewhere that attracts me. As for the characters, they just come naturally.

Disco Biscuit: I think all your books are fabulous. What inspired you to create these blockbusters and were you flattered by the French and Saunders spoof which was called *The Lucky Bitches*?

JC: I love French and Saunders, I think they are particularly funny and brilliant, and *Lucky Bitches* was particularly hilarious. This week I pre-recorded a Ruby Wax show which will appear on TV at the end of October. She is also a great comedian and I had a fantastic time. On Saturday night, I am appearing on the final Lily Savage show of the season – I'm really looking forward to it.

Chris L: What's the most outrageous item of clothing that you own?

JC: A fabulous leopardskin negligee but I only wear it on very special occasions! I somehow think it's more suited to one of my heroines!

Paul: Have you ever considered going into acting and television like your sister Joan?

JC: I tried a little bit of acting when I was a teenager and hated it. As far as I was concerned at that time I was an out-of-work writer waiting to tell my stories to the world.

John Holmes: Have you ever come across someone who has recognised themselves in your books?

JC: This happens all the time, but they usually recognise someone else as the bad character and themselves as the good character. However, when I wrote a book called *The Stud* every man in Hollywood imagined it was him!

Rose: Do you and Joan get along in real life? Is there a lot of rivalry vis a vis book writing?

JC: There is absolutely no rivalry at all and we get along very well. We do not live in each others' pockets and we are both very different. However, the ridiculous stories in the press about our 'rivalry' always amuse us.

Klaas: Do you believe in heaven?

JC: I certainly do and I hope it's a long, long time before I go there!

Jackie Collins was a recent visitor to Freeserve

Natasha M: Your books are the only friends I like to take on holiday with me; what books do you like to read when you go on vacation?

JC: I am particularly fond of tough, male fiction with humour. My favourites are Elmore Leonard, and Mario Puzo.

Elaine: Do your friends still trust you with their gossip for fear of reading about it in your next bestseller?

JC: They tell me everything! I am very lucky – I have so many different sources from limo drivers to mega producers. There is nothing they don't reveal!

Night of a thousand stars

If you like the idea of popping a question to a famous person, be sure to check out Freeserve Chat at *www.freeserve.com/chat* regularly. New stars take part all the time, so you never know who you might find there! In October celebs who chatted to Freeserve users included Bill Bryson, Jackie Collins and Ian Hislop. And past celebs who have chatted include Greg Rusedski, Fay Weldon, Robert Llewellyn and Sada Walkington. Simply think of a question you'd like answered and enter it into the box: if it gets chosen your celeb will answer it.

So keep checking back at *www.freeserve.com/chat* to see who'll be appearing next – then you won't miss your opportunity!

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Your place on the Internet

Can't decide what you are going to do with your 15Mb of free Web space from Freeserve? Here are three examples of what Freeserve members have done, to provide inspiration!

Grandma Knows Best

If you've got a fantastic cure for hiccups, a sure-fire way to make a sponge cake rise or are a dab hand at making a coal fire light, then it's more than possible that you learnt your skill from your parents or grandparents – somehow they always seem to know the best thing to do!

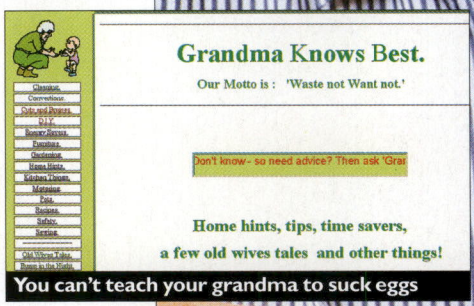
And that's the inspiration behind Grandma Knows Best, a site that is absolutely jam-packed with hints and tips on everything from washing windows to treating sunburn, from preserving coffee to removing cat hairs from furniture.

The motto of the site is 'Waste not, want not', and that really is the theme of the entire content – make the most of what you have available! That includes making the most of your time, so if you need 'home hints, tips, time savers' or even like to read some old wives' tales, then this should be the first place that you head! Everything is organised into easy-to-use categories, so you shouldn't have any problems in finding the hint or tip that you are looking for.

For example, imagine that you have a nasty red wine stain on an expensive carpet after a party. Head straight for the 'Home hints' section, then go to the 'carpets' link. There you'll find tips on how to mop up liquid from a carpet and deal with the stain. There are some unusual tips that you might not have heard of before – for instance, did you know that 'sometimes a paste of cream of tartar spread on fabric or carpet wine stains will do the trick'? Some tips sound unlikely but will work – try holding the the top of a green onion to a bee sting and it really will relieve the pain.

So be sure to visit Grandma Knows Best next time you have a problem that needs sorting!

www.g-k-b.fsnet.co.uk



You can't teach your grandma to suck eggs

Crossbreed and Mongrel Club

Pedigree dogs have been celebrated throughout the centuries, but what about the poor old mongrel? Well, now crossbreeds are represented on the Web with the Crossbreed and Mongrel Club (CMC). Founded in 1994, the CMC was set up by non-pedigree dog owners who wanted a club that appreciated

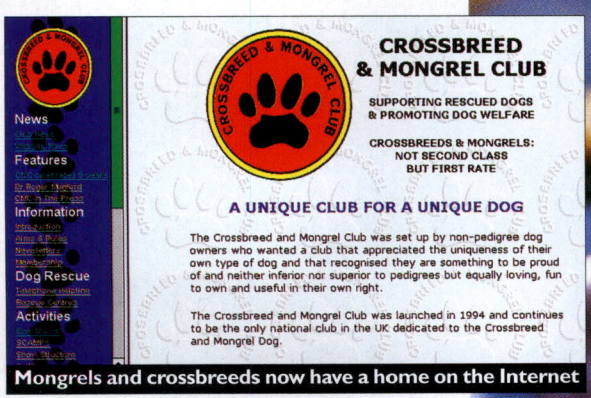
Learn about light pollution at Dark Skies

the uniqueness of their own type of dog and which recognised they are something to be proud of. And that's exactly what the site does – celebrates everything about the mongrel! There are details of the club's dog shows on the site: CMC shows are special, because they're 'designed to be enjoyable for both the dogs and their owners. It is a social meeting of like-minded individuals where the competition never gets too serious'.

You'll find lots of information about forthcoming events on this site, as well as lots of photographs of members' dogs and details about how to join the Club.

So if you're a proud owner of a mongrel, be sure to visit the Crossbreed and Mongrel Club site today!

www.crossbreed.freeserve.co.uk



Mongrels and crossbreeds now have a home on the Internet

Campaign for Dark Skies

There's a joke that says you can tell if a person has always lived in London because they won't have seen more than twelve stars in the night sky since they went camping as a kid. It's probably a little exaggerated, but rings true: gaze up when you're in any large city, for that matter, and you won't see an awful lot. It's a phenomenon named 'light pollution', and it's something that the British Astronomical Association is trying to minimise.

As the Dark Skies site states, 'over the last 40 years, millions of lights have blotted out the night sky for people living in towns, and even in the countryside, road lights and security lights can cause problems for anyone who wants to see the stars.'

While not wishing to abolish light at night-time completely ('We need light at night for many reasons', says the site), the astronomers are aiming to make lighting more efficient so that less is wasted into the sky. There's lots about the campaign on this information-packed site, including the latest news about events and forums, newsletters detailing the progress of the campaign, examples of both good and bad lighting and 'information sheets' on what you can do to help minimise light pollution in your area. Tips include: 'Tell astronomers and non-astronomers about the skyglow issue, stressing energy and money wasted. What would they think if water mains leaked every few metres?'.

So the next time you gaze up at the sky and are unable to see stars, take a look at this site and you'll be suitably enlightened!

www.dark-skies.freeserve.co.uk

Corbis; Retna

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Join in the search

There's nothing worse than not being able to find what you are looking for on the Internet. Use our guide to help you find your way, saving you lots of precious time!

Let's face it, the Internet is a vast place: at the last count, it was estimated that there were something like 80 million sites contained within it. And on those sites, just about every subject under the sun is covered – you name it, someone has probably created a page about it! That's an awful lot of infomation to have to trawl through.

So how on earth are you meant to find what you are looking for amongst all that? It can be a problem, but that's what search engines are for. Basically, a search engine is a site that scans the Internet for what you are looking for, and returns a set of links to pages that contain the information you need, often with a short description of what is on that page. At least, that's the theory, but if you don't know the best way to use a search engine, you could be left with thousands of returns that have no relevance to what you are looking for, and be left even more confused than when you originally started!

To demonstrate how important searching on the Internet is, a recent survey suggested that around 57 percent of Internet users searched the Web each day, making it the second most popular activity after email. How many of those are using search engines efficiently, however, is open to debate.

Trawl the Internet

So what can you do? Well, firstly it's important to find a powerful engine – basically, the more pages the search engine scans in its quest to find your information, the more powerful it is considered. The Freeserve search engine (*www.freeserve.com/search*) is extremely powerful, with over 80 million sites categorised so start there. On the page you will notice that there is a small text box. This is where you need to type what you are looking for. Say, for example, you are looking for information on the rock band The Police. Type that phrase into the box and click the button, and you will find that you will receive lots of pages about law enforce-

Utilise the latest search technology

powered by freeserve www.freeserve.com

ment and American police services. Not quite what you were looking for! The problem is that the search engine is looking for pages where both words ('the' and 'Police') are occurring separately, which is obviously a lot! So there are a number of things you can try. If you are looking for a particular phrase, try typing it into the box in inverted commas ("the police"). Then the engine will look for pages where the two words are together. If this still doesn't work, you'll have to narrow your search down even further. This can be done by thinking of words that might also occur on pages that you are looking for. In this case, it could be 'band' or 'Sting'. So, after 'The Police' in the text box, add another word. "'The Police" Sting' will find you a lot more relevant matches!

▪ Narrow it down

There's another way to narrow down your search when using the Freeserve engine – you'll see that next to the text box there is a small drop-down menu, which will let you choose between searching worldwide sites, European sites and UK sites. This can be particularly useful if you want, for example, to search for universities in the UK and don't want to end up with a list of US colleges! What is even better is that if the subject you are looking for is on the Freeserve site, that link will appear first of all, so you needn't travel too far away from the search engine.

If you are still having problems, head for the Search Assistant by clicking on the button further down the page. This will allow you to define your search even further, by letting you type in words that should not feature on your pages – in the last example, you could exclude the word 'America'. You can even choose to limit your search to pages that contain particular files or applications, such as Shockwave, MP3 or Java – so if you're looking for a game to play at work during the lunch hour, the Freeserve search engine will help you find one. Or, if you are looking for a page that you know is fairly new, or fairly old, the 'Date' section allows you specify a time period of sites to search within. Finally, you can even select how 'deep' within sites you would like to search: for example, whether the engine should just look at the 'top' page of each site, or any page at all.

So in other words, when you are using a search engine, make sure to be as specific as possible. You'll get the results that are relevant and as close as possible to what you are looking for, allowing you to make the most of all those 80 million sites!

www.freeserve.com/search

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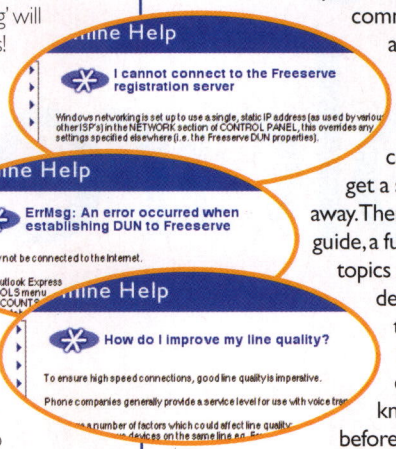
www.freeserve.com

Online help

We've put together an awesome set of answers, for all the technical queries that you might have. It's available on our website – and it's free!

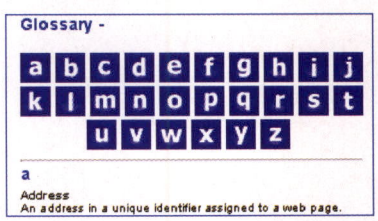


What are my options?

If you're new to the Net, Freeserve is committed to making it as easy as possible for you to get online. We've designed the help section on the Freeserve website so you can turn to Freeserve and get a straight answer, straight away. There's a complete content guide, a full alphabetical index of topics and a find function – all designed to take you straight to the answer you need. Separate sections deal with everything you need to know to avoid problems before set-up, and tell you what to expect as you begin to install the software from the CD-ROM onto your machine. It really is that simple!

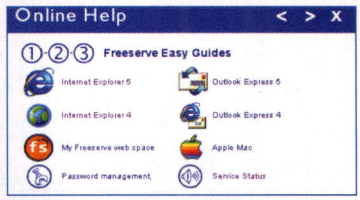
How does online help work?

It's easy! There are four main sources of information. Read through the descriptions below and you'll soon see which best suits the type of query you have. Then connect to Freeserve, visit the help section and get all your questions answered quickly.



The Glossary

If there's an Internet expression you don't understand, turn to our glossary first. It's more than likely to be there.



The Easy Guides

If there's an area of your Net use that is causing you difficulty, turn to our Easy Guides for a complete solution. You'll find answers sorted by subject.

Questions and Answers

If there's a specific question you need answered, turn to our Q&A section for rapid help. First select the general area from our drop-down menu, then a specific question. You may find your question has already been answered.

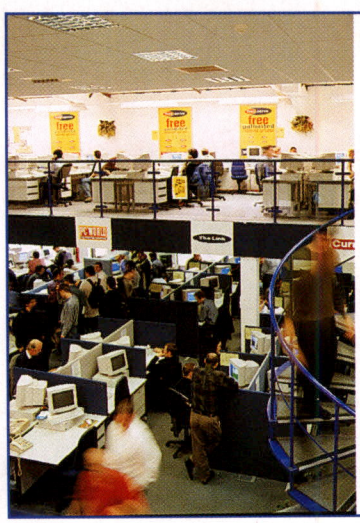
Contacts

If you still need help, you can email our support staff. They're the same people who staff our phone helpdesks, and they're trained to deal with your queries. Direct email addresses are listed on the contacts page. They'll be happy to help you!

How do I find answers on the CD?

Alternatively, there's also a fully comprehensive Help feature on the Freeserve start-up CD-ROM. When you put the CD in your machine you'll be given four options. The help button takes you to a comprehensive set of instructions to enable you to get online with Freeserve.

www.freeserve.com/search



Phoneline help

Our experts are on call 24 hours a day

Using Freeserve's online help couldn't be simpler, but from time to time you might have a direct question for one of our experts. To help you get the most out of your connection, Freeserve's Technical Support is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Make sure you've consulted our online help before you call, as you may find we've already answered your question. If not, our trained staff can provide you with instant answers in plain English on a range of Internet subjects. Calls cost 50p per minute.

PC Support 0906 2517517 Mac 0906 7234000

Kobal

the *fastest* way yet to explore the *Internet*

Now Freeserve offers a new, high speed Internet service, ten times faster than an ordinary modem.
FreeservePlus gives you permanent connection. No waiting for dial-up, no waiting for sites and music downloads. Video is smoother, colours brighter, sound and vision enhanced. All for a competitively priced, fixed monthly cost from £39.99, with no other Internet call charges. This is the future of the Internet. Discover it today at www.freeserve.com/plus*

freeserve*plus*
www.freeserve.com

THE UK's No. 1 JUST GOT EVEN BETTER

For more information or to register online visit www.freeserve.com/plus or visit a PC WORLD THE COMPUTER SUPERSTORE near you.

**Offer available to BT customers only. FreeservePlus is subject to a one-off installation fee from £150. All applications are subject to status, availability at the local exchange and Terms of Use available online. Minimum contract term is 12 months. Details correct at time of going to press.*

stepbystep

This month: how to go online or send emails through TVs, WAP phones and games consoles. Plus, our regular beginners' guides to email, newsgroups and chat

Your technical problems well sorted with our easy-to-follow guide to the Net

WHAT IS THE INTERNET?

The Internet is a huge global network of computers, with literally millions of machines connected together across the planet.

HOW DO I GET ON IT?

All you really need is a computer, a modem, an Internet Service Provider (ISP) and a telephone line.

WHAT CAN I DO THERE?

1 **Surf the Worldwide Web.**
2 Send someone an email.
3 **Take part in a newsgroup discussion.**
4 Make friends and get chatting with people from all over the world.

CONTENTS

124 CHOOSING AN ISP Use our easy-to-follow guide to find the right one for you

128 HARDWARE Surfing the Net or sending emails no longer requires PC access; we look at the best alternative hardware

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136 EMAIL How to start communicating electronically

139 NEWSGROUPS Hook up and take part in one today!

140 CHAT Find a like-minded natterer online

PC-free Web boxes p128

What Service Provider?

December 2000 Thinking of changing your ISP? Or perhaps you haven't signed up to anyone yet. Either way, consult our guide

What is an ISP?

An Internet service provider, or ISP, is a company that connects you to the Internet. All you need do is exploit the provider's permanent Net connection by connecting to it.

Get the best ISP deal

Right now, literally hundreds of ISPs are vying for your business – which is great news for consumers. But to help you make a truly informed decision, we've tested the best service providers on the market.

Below, you'll find our ratings for the current crop of the best ISPs looking to connect you. There are several companies that are now offering completely free access – and that includes the price of the phone call that connects you to the Internet. LocalTel pioneered this service back in the spring of last year with the launch of Screaming.Net. Since then several companies have started to offer free calls to the Net at certain times of the day.

This new breed of ISP has started to change the landscape of Net access in the UK. That said, many of those who have launched free-access packages have struggled to cope with the huge demand and have been forced to withdraw their services. However, the more measured flat-fee service offered by AOL (see ISP News, page 135) looks likely to stand more chance of survival. Do check that free does mean 'free' and that you're not going to be charged a technical support charge.

Call costs

Apart from the new breed of free services, nearly every ISP charges local call rates. For BT customers, this means 4p/min on weekdays between 8am-6pm; 1.5p/min during off-peak times, and 1p/min at the weekend. If you're not with BT, check with your phone company.

Speeding up

To say things are only going to get faster is an understatement. BT's ADSL (Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line) is now being rolled out. It offers an 'always on', high-speed connection to the Net with data delivery speeds of 10-40 times a conventional modem. At the moment, most modems operate at 56kbps (kilobits per second) or less. For info, go to ***www.btopenworld.com.***

BEGINNER'S TIP

Put the phone number you use to dial up to the Internet on your BT Friends and Family list.

INTERMEDIATE TIP

Set up several free accounts. If for any reason you cannot connect to one provider, simply try another one. There's no limit to how many accounts you have.

ADVANCED TIP

Consider installing an extra phone line. It means you can have one for the phone and one for your modem, so you can use the Internet as much as you like.

INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDERS

ISP NAME	WEB ADDRESS	DESCRIPTION	TYPE OF SERVICE
AngliaNet Limited	***www.anglianet.co.uk***	Dial-up, Web hosting and design for home and business users	Unlimited
AOL	***www.aol.co.uk***	A large ISP offering proprietary software and 1p per minute call rate at any time	Unlimited
Aviators Network	***www.aviators.net***	An ISP designed with aircraft-related content for the pilot and the enthusiast	Unlimited
BREATHE **FREE**	***www.breathe.co.uk***	Well-established free ISP. Easy-to-use site design	Unlimited
Btclick.com	***www.btclick.com***	The free Internet service from BT	Unlimited
BT Internet	***www.btinternet.com***	Another Internet arm of BT, offering a full access package	Unlimited
Bun **FREE**	***www.bun.com***	The free ISP offering of *The Sun* newspaper	Unlimited
Cable and Wireless Lite **FREE**	***www.cwcom.net***	Free Net access for CW customers	Unlimited
CALLNET **FREE**	***www.callnetuk.com***	Innovative free ISP offering enhanced Web-based services	Unlimited
CIX	***www.cix.co.uk***	The Compulink Information eXchange. Provides Internet conferencing accounts	Unlimited
ClaraNET Ltd	***www.clara.net***	Subscription-based ISP with a range of account options to suit any needs	Unlimited
Compuserve	***www.compuserve.co.uk***	Free unlimited access for the first month	Unlimited
CYBERphile Internet	***www.cyberphile.co.uk***	Business-oriented, Midlands-based provider. Specialists in leased lines, LANs, firewalls, ISDN etc	Unlimited
Dabsol **FREE**	***www.dabsol.net***	Free ISP with online sign-up help and comprehensive features	Unlimited
Demon Internet	***www.demon.net***	With e-commerce solutions and fax-to-email	Unlimited
Direct Connection	***www.dircon.net***	Home and business ISP offering global roaming among their services	Unlimited
Easynet Ltd	***www.easynet.net***	Subscription-based dial-up service. Winner of best European ISP at this year's ISPA awards	Unlimited
EidosNet **FREE**	***www.eidosnet.co.uk***	EidosNet is brought to you by Eidos, publishers of *Tomb Raider* and other great games	Unlimited
Enterprise plc	***www.enterprise.net***	Subscription-based ISP with a host of features including game and news servers	Unlimited
F9 Free **FREE**	***www.f9.net.uk***	Free ISP from previously subscription-only service Force 9	Unlimited
Firstnet Services Ltd	***www.firstnet.co.uk***	Business Internet solution provider	Unlimited
Free Internet **FREE**	***www.free-internet.co.uk***	Free access, free mail and Web space. Comprehensive service in a neat package	Unlimited
FREENET **FREE**	***www.freenet.co.uk***	More free access with a gaming bias. Online auto sign-up and newsgroups add to the interest	Unlimited
Free Online **FREE**	***www.free-online.net***	Straightforward free ISP offering news and email	Unlimited
Freeserve **FREE**	***www.freeserve.net***	Free provider from the Dixons Group of companies	Unlimited
Free to You **FREE**	***www.freezyou.co.uk***	No-frills free ISP with online sign-up	Unlimited
Freewire **FREE**	***www.freewire.net***	Free ISP with no sign-up requirements	Unlimited
Freezone **FREE**	***www.freezone.co.uk***	A free ISP offering the usual package in a smart format	Unlimited
Gateway 2000 **FREE**	***www.ukgateway.net***	An ISP service from the hardware retailers of the same name. Packaged with Gateway computers	Unlimited

ISPs explained Using our easy-to-follow guide

FREE CONNECTIONS
There are now many companies that will get you on to the Internet without charging a subscription fee – the only thing you pay for is the price of the phone call that connects you.

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES
Despite the plethora of free ISPs springing up, there are still many which charge a flat monthly fee. These generally offer free technical support; most free ISPs charge by the minute.

CONTENT PROVIDERS
Content providers also charge to get you online, but provide exclusive content to members, and a sense of 'community'.

How the tables work

Description
A brief description of the services offered by the ISP in question.

Type of service
Tells you whether there is any restriction on how often you can use the Internet.

Phone number
The number to ring if you want to sign up.

Email addresses
Some service providers give you only one email address, others provide as many as you want.

Content
Outlines whether the service provider in question provides its own content and whether it is exclusive to its users.

Macintosh support
Not all service providers offer software and technical support for Macs, preferring to concentrate on PCs – so be sure to check this column out if you're an Apple user.

Web space
If you are interested in designing your own Web page, most Internet Service Providers will give you space to store it on. 2Mb should be enough for most people's requirements.

Set-up fee
Some ISPs charge a fee to open an account.

Monthly charge
If you don't go with a free ISP, then you'll pay a set amount per month to be online.

Phone support charges
Technical support is great – as long as you're not having to pay a fortune to benefit from it. Find out how much free service providers charge per minute for calls to their technical support desks.

Telephone support hours
The hours when the technical support desk will be open to take your calls.

Our ISP testing is carried out by NetBasics, an independent company specialising in providing ISP information for consumers and businesses. NetBasics makes every effort to ensure that the data presented to you is correct. The publishers of *the Net* and NetBasics cannot be held liable for any damages caused by the publication of this data. Any Internet service provider that wishes to be included in the evaluation programme should contact eval@netbasics.com **For more information on NetBasics, visit its Web site at *www.netbasics.com*.**

PHONE NUMBER	EMAIL ADDRESS	CONTENT	MAC SUPPORT	WEB SPACE	SET-UP FEE	MONTHLY CHARGE	PHONE SUPPORT CHARGES	PHONE SUPPORT HOURS
01473 211922	1	None	Yes	5Mb	0	11.75	Mobile	9-5 M-F, 8-9 S-S
0800 3765432	7	Massive amount of content	Yes	14Mb	0	9.99	Free	8-10.30 M-S 11-19.30 S
0700 2842867	1	Flight planning and navigation	No	15Mb	0	11.75	Standard	9-9 7 days
0800 2983030	5	Entertainment, sport, shopping, finance etc	Yes	10Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
0800 800001	Unlimited	From Excite	No	0	0	0	50p per minute	8-12 Midnight
0800 800001	5	None	Yes	10Mb	0	9.99	Local	24/7
0845 3063636	5	Online dating, Bunshopping, *The Sun* online etc	Yes	25Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
0800 0923 001	5	Channels and account administration	No	20 Mb	0	0	National	24/7
020 73358300	5	Chat servers, channels, services, Web news	Yes	20Mb	0	0	Free	24/7
0845 3555050	Unlimited	None	Yes	30Mb	0	17.61	Local call	9-10 M-F, 12-6 S-S
0800 3582828	Unlimited	None	Yes	25Mb	0	8.99	Free	24/7
0870 6000 800	7	A large range of channels and excellent forums	No	42Mb	0	7.50	National	8-12 Midnight
01543 454840	1	None	Yes	0.1Mb	0	11.74	Standard	8.30-6 M-F
Sign up online	Unlimited	None	No	Unlimited	0	0	Metered	24/7
0800 4589666	Unlimited	None	No	20Mb	0	11.75	Local	24/7
0800 0720000	Unlimited	User zone containing handy member services	Yes	20Mb	0	13.50	Local	9-9/7
020 76814444	Unlimited	None	Yes	2Mb	0	11.99	Free	24/7
Sign up online	Unlimited	Free access to the Mplayer games network	No	20Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
01624 677666	Unlimited	None	Yes	5Mb	0	11.75	Local	9-10 M-F 10-4 S-S
0800 0737800	Unlimited	None	Yes	15Mb	0	0	National	7-11, 7 Days
0113 294 4224	Unlimited	Search engines and support	Yes	10Mb	0	12.50	Local	Business hours
Sign up online	1	Newsgroups and IE5 download	No	10Mb	0	0	Metered	24/7
08700 722622	Unlimited	Games links and independent status	Yes	20Mb	0	0	National rates	9-6 7 days
0870 7060504	5	None	Yes	Unlimited	0	0	Premium rate	24/7
0990 500049	Unlimited	Extensive channel-based content	Yes	15Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
Sign up online	Unlimited	Search engine page and technical support	No	10Mb	0	0	Available soon	n/a
Sign up online	Unlimited	None	No	15Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
0870 7441111	Unlimited	On-site search engine access	No	20Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
At Gateway Stores	Unlimited	None	No	10Mb	0	0	Free	24/7

INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDERS

ISP NAME	WEB ADDRESS	DESCRIPTION	TYPE OF SERVICE
Go Free FREE	www.gofree.co.uk	Free ISP offering online sign-up, complete with helpline	Unlimited
IC24 FREE	www.ic24.net	The free ISP service of Mirror Group Newspapers	Unlimited
Knowall FREE	www.knowall.net	Large business ISP designed to serve SMEs and home users with business interests	Unlimited
LineOne FREE	www.lineone.net	BT's formerly paid-for home-user Internet service is now free	Unlimited
London Web Comm Ltd	www.londonweb.net	Useful London Local Directory will help you find everything from a plumber to an accountant	Unlimited
Netcom	www.netcom.net.uk	A comprehensive range of services to the home and business user	Unlimited
Nildram	www.nildram.net	Subscription-based ISP with a Low User option	Unlimited
OrbitalNet	www.orbitalnet.co.uk	Subscription-based ISP with a range of account options to suit any needs	Unlimited
Paradise Internet Network Service	www.pins.co.uk	Paradise Internet is a subscription provider which also authors software	Unlimited
Powergen Surf & Save FREE	www.pgen.net	Powergen's own ISP earns you points off your electricity bill	Unlimited
Screaming.net FREE	www.screaming.net	The pioneer of the free access/free phone call model	Unlimited
Smartone FREE	www.smartone.co.uk	Content-based service offering free dial-ups and plenty of rewards	Unlimited
Sniff Out FREE	www.sniffout.net	Free ISP with online sign-up help and comprehensive features	Unlimited
Sonnet Internet Ltd	www.sonnet.co.uk	Packages and solutions for the private and business user	Unlimited
This is it! FREE	www.thisisit.co.uk	End-user targeted free ISP	Unlimited
UK Online Ltd FREE	www.ukonline.co.uk	A family-friendly free ISP with plenty of shareware and gaming software. Sign up online	Unlimited
UUNet	www.uk.uu.net	Wide range of business solutions and PipexDial for single/multi-user accounts	Unlimited
Virgin Net FREE	www.virgin.net	The long-standing ISP now offering a free Internet access service	Unlimited
Which? Online	www.which.net	A free ISP from the eponymous consumer affairs magazine	Unlimited
Wireplay Internet FREE	www.wireplay.com	Wireplay is an online games network offering access to Intranet-based fast games servers	Unlimited
X-Stream Network FREE	www.x-stream.com	Offers enhanced member services, such as occasional free phone calls to the Net	Unlimited

Network performance

December 2000

Independent testing carried out by NetBasics – contact eval@netbasics.com

We test the best ISPs in the country for the reliability and speed of their connection. The tests are conducted in three areas and a star rating is given indicative of their performance. The three areas of testing are:

VARIATION IN MODEM SPEED

This is a gauge to measure whether you get a constant speed once a modem connects to an ISP. ISPs should offer a constant speed and we measure any variation. Each ISP starts with 100 percent and loses position the greater the variance in connection. This is achieved by comparison so that no ISP is favoured above others.

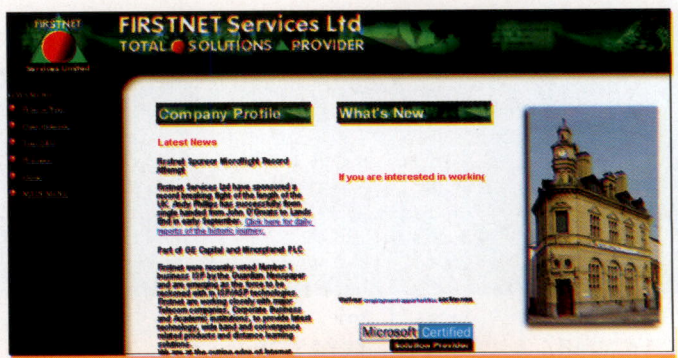
VARIATION IN TIME TO CONNECT

This section of the test measures the variation in how long it takes to get connected to your ISP. The reading is taken from the stage between clicking 'Connect' and then physically connecting.

AVAILABILITY

There's nothing more frustrating than dialling your ISP and finding you can't actually get through and on to the Internet. This area measures how many times an ISP refuses to connect, either through the engaged tone, or if it does not respond correctly to modem signals. The results are combined into a single reading giving us a fair way to chart ISPs based on relevant aspects of their dial-in service.

The results shown in the chart (right) are based on a sample of 50 ISPs from ongoing tests.



1	Firstnet Services	★★★★★	
2	Knowall	★★★★★	
3	Smartone	★★★★★	
4	Netcom	★★★★★	
5	Powergen	★★★★★	
6	AngliaNet	★★★★★	
7	UUNet	★★★★★	
8	Wireplay	★★★★★	
9	Nildram	★★★★★	
10	BT Internet	★★★★★	
11	Cyberphile	★★★★★	
12	LineOne	★★★★★	
13	Enterprise	★★★★★	
14	London Web	★★★★★	
15	Aviators' Network	★★★★★	
16	Direct Connection	★★★★★	
17	Gateway	★★★★★	
18	CallNet	★★★★★	
19	Free Internet	★★★★★	
20	Sonnet	★★★★★	
21	Freewire	★★★★★	
22	This is it!	★★★★	
23	BT Click	★★★★	
24	Free Online	★★★★	
25	F9 Free	★★★★	
26	Sniff Out	★★★★	
27	FreeNet	★★★★	
28	Freeserve	★★★★	
29	Free to You	★★★★	
30	Paradise Internet	★★★★	
31	Dabsol	★★★★	
32	Easynet	★★★	
33	Eidosnet	★★★	
34	Bun	★★★	
35	Go Free	★★★	
36	Compuserve	★★★	
37	Breathe	★★★	
38	AOL	★★★	
39	Virgin Net	★★★	
40	UK Online	★★★	
41	ClaraNet	★★★	
42	Screaming.net	★★★	
43	The X-Stream Network	★★★	
44	Demon Internet	★★★	
45	Which? Online	★★	
46	OrbitalNet	★★	
47	CIX	★★	
48	Cable & Wireless Internet	★★	
49	IC24	★★	
50	Freezone	★★	

what service provider?

PHONE NUMBER	EMAIL ADDRESSES	CONTENT	MAC SUPPORT	WEB SPACE	SET-UP FEE	MONTHLY CHARGE	PHONE SUPPORT CHARGES	PHONE SUPPORT HOURS
Sign up online	Unlimited	None	No	20Mb	0	0	Metered	24/7
0870 9090262	Unlimited	Channel based content with news, sport, weather	No	10Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
020 76101115	Unlimited	UK business search; site for mobile users	No	10Mb	0	0	Metered	7-8 M-Sat
0800 111210	5	News, shopping, sport, community etc	Yes	10Mb	0	0	50p per minute	8-Midnight M-Sa
020 83494500	3	None	Yes	5Mb	17.63	14.68	Standard	9-9 M-Sa
0870 5668008	20	A business oriented portal site	Yes	25Mb	0	14.95	National	24/7
0800 0720460	Unlimited	Product and service information	Yes	25Mb	0	11.75	Local	8-9 (7 days)
01233 646505	5	None	Yes	5Mb	0	0	Local	Business hours
01256 414863	1	None	Yes	5Mb	17.63	9.40	National/email	11-7 M-F
0870 6060653	5	Channel-based content with searches. Extensive	Yes	10Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
Sign up at Tempo	Unlimited	Travel, entertainment, business, sport etc	No	10Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
08700 774411	1 unified	Original portal site containing many links	Yes	5Mb	0	0	Metered	9/6 M-F 10-5Sun
01884 742510	Unlimited	Channel based layout with news, sport etc	Yes	20Mb	0	0	National	24/7
020 78912000	Unlimited	None	Yes	5Mb	0	12.50	National	9-9 M-S
0906 9124000	Unlimited	None	No	20Mb	0	0	£1 per minute	24/7
01749 333333	1	None	Yes	Unlimited	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
08702 424220	12	None	No	50Mb	Call	Call	Call	9-8 M-F, 10-6 Sa
0500 558800	5	Several Virgin channels	Yes	10Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
0645 830240	1	Online shopping and consumer affairs content	Yes	2Mb	11.75	14.75	Free	24/7
0845 757 7577	0	Games news, games chat, games add-ons	No	0	0	0	50p per minute	12pm-12 am, 7 days
0870 7306466	1	Chat, news, lifestyle, shopping, etc	No	20Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7

ISP NEWS IN BRIEF
All the service provider news you need

AOL keeps control of its flat-fee service

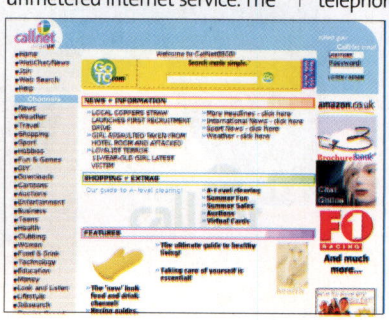
AOL, which continued to charge users a subscription fee long after the advent of free ISPs such as Freeserve, has announced a flat-fee, unmetered access service to the Internet, costing £14.99 a month. This charge includes both subscription and call costs, plus freephone user support. To ensure AOL won't be swamped with a demand it cannot meet, like other ISPs which have gone down a similar road, the service will be rolled out to existing AOL members first, with priority given to longest-serving subscribers. When all subscribers have been offered the flat-rate, it will be offered to new members.

www.aol.co.uk

CallNet's free fall

CallNet is one of the latest ISPs to fall victim to its own free, unmetered Internet service. The US-owned company called in the administrators after facing a mountain of unpaid telephone charges. It was also cut off by its own telecoms provider, Cable and Wireless, because of money owed. The free service reportedly lost £200,000 a week. CallNet also has a successful pay-as-you go-service, which continues as normal.

www.callnetuk.com



Net Basics
The Internet in Focus
ISP Directory

Blow through the mist surrounding Internet Service Provision with desktop software designed by NetBasics, the leading ISP industry research organisation.

The ISP Directory features over 100 key facts and pricing information for nearly 200 UK ISPs including every industry leader.

For further info, visit:
www.netbasics.com

Net Basics™
The Internet in Focus

NetBasics, The Internet in Focus
info@netbasics.com
Telephone 0113 246 0009 in the UK

WHO NEEDS COMPUTERS?

The days of hunting down a computer every time you want to surf the Internet or send an email are over. Enter a new wave of PC-free interactive appliances. No more excuses!

OVER THE LAST FOUR YEARS, THE Internet has been transformed from an exclusive service for tech-heads into a global data conduit for the masses. It has brought nations closer together, has impacted the global economy in ways that nobody could have imagined, and now influences every aspect of our lives. So why is it, then, that the only way to access it is through a lump of electronics housed in a rectangular slab of beige metal?

That, no doubt, was the question asked by a range of companies over the course of the last year. The good news is that those companies have started producing products that can log on to the Internet and bear no resemblance to a £1500 PC. The bad news is that it's still early days – and there's a long way to go until Internet-access appliances become as abundant and easy to use as other appliances, like TVs and microwaves. So if you're already wired and would like to get friends online without either the cost or the hassle of installing a PC, here are a few options...

YOUR FRIENDS CAN NOW GO ONLINE WITHOUT THE COST OR HASSLE OF A PC

TWO-WAY TV

The latest research shows that many homes have two or three TV sets: a large-screen in the sitting room, portable in the bedroom and another in a spare room. What the media companies would like to do is add a dose of interactivity to these goggle boxes by plugging them into the Internet. There are two ways of doing this: sell a new television with built-in Internet access, or produce a separate box that sits atop an existing TV.

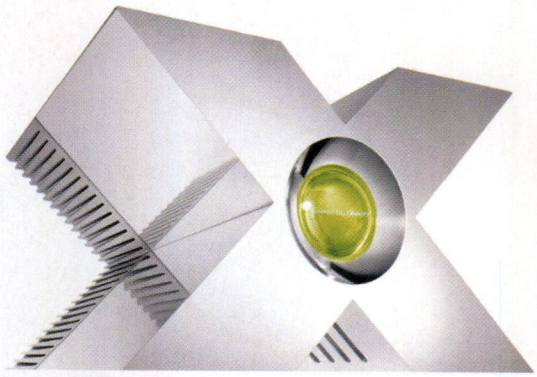
Britain's Bush are one of the first companies to produce an Internet-enabled TV set. Their 14in Internet TV is on sale now, and allows users to both surf the Web and send and receive emails (Bush have hooked up with Virgin.net). It even comes with an auto-setup feature for techno-phobes. It's a nifty little product that can be added to – a keyboard and printer are also available.

Of course, many people are experiencing the joys of email for the first time with Sky Digital – although it's not much fun writing an email using the remote control (it's similar to composing an SMS text message on your mobile phone). Dixons, however, will happily flog you an add-on keyboard – which is indispensable if you plan on using the service a lot.

Sky are remaining tight-lipped about the possibility of full Net access through their satellites, but OnDigital are pressing ahead with

BUSH INTERNET TV
PRICE £169
Built-in browser, Nicam digital stereo; standalone set-top box also available
www.bushinternet.com

Sony PlayStation 2
PRICE £299
Broadband enabled, optional 56k modem, multi-player online gaming
www.playstation-europe.com



Microsoft XBox **PRICE approx £300**
Broadband enabled, optional modem, multi-player online gaming ***www.x-box.com***

Sega Dreamcast
PRICE £199
Email, Web browser, 56k modem, multi-player online gaming
www.dreamcast-europe.com

OnNet
PRICE £5 per month subscription
Cordless keyboard, Net-top box, video- and voice-grab email
www.ondigital.co.uk

their plans. The OnNet service uses a set-top box (£159) and, according to the company, 'it will provide full Internet access, not the "walled garden" approach of other platforms.' You still access the Internet via their portal (and we'll bet advertising rates will be high on that), then out onto the Web at large. So far, so boring – what does sound funky is the interactive side of things: some programmes and adverts, for example, will include what they're calling 'X-links' which whisk you off to a Web site.

Research shows that half of all digital TV subscribers are taking advantage of their boxes' Internet capabilities. It would be inaccurate to say that the set-top box market was exploding, but some big players are certainly working hard to get non-computer owners online. Most importantly, the price of these boxes is quite reasonable – they tend to cost around the £100 mark, making them affordable as gifts, as well as upgrades.

There are certainly some hip-looking set-top boxes out there. The RCA RW2110, for instance, looks similar to a standard digital satellite box: it comes with a remote control and keyboard, and utilises a 56k modem. It has proved popular in the US, where it hooks up to the Microsoft Web TV network – so if you violently hate Bill Gates, it's one to avoid.

All the big Asian electronics companies are working on set-top Internet boxes. Samsung should win some sort of award, however, for their STB-108, which has all the design charisma of a brick. It features a 56k modem and is claimed to be HTML 3.2 compliant.

The Web2U, while sharing the same boring look as the Samsung device, does at least have the advantage of being fairly discreet. We like the fact that it's British, that it ships with an infrared keyboard at no extra cost and comes complete with a standard printer port. It's HTML 3.0 compliant and supports email, chat (IRC too, which is pretty impressive) and audio. With 8Mb of RAM on-board and good picture quality, Web2U reckon theirs is the first set-top system that's as good as a PC. Thems are fightin' words!

STOP PLAYING – START SURFING

As we've seen, one of the best ways to get non-computer users online is by piggy-backing a modem-based device onto their TV. There's also another way: the Trojan horse. All of the latest games consoles (and a few of the older ones) will have Internet access built in. These are meant primarily for multiplayer games, but there's no doubt that they'll also be used for email and accessing the Internet.

The Sony PlayStation 2 will come with broadband Internet access in those countries where the telecom scene isn't strangled by an archaic monopoly – unlike this one – and it

DATEL'S WORLD PORT BRINGS LIMITED INTERNET ACCESS TO GAMEBOY AND PSX

Log on to Datel (*www.d3world.com*) for World Port info

WORDS: ANDY HUTCHINSON; PICTURES: NICK WRIGHT, GARY KEVIN

Nokia Communicator 9110
PRICE dependent on network
Email ***www.nokia.co.uk***

Amstrad E-M@iler
PRICE £79.99
Fax, phone and email; 700-name address book
www.amstrad.com

connectivity to that familiar device – the phone. On the downside, each email you send costs money (a couple of pence a time), and you also get really irritating adverts on the LCD screen. However, the E-M@iler does work fairly easily, and wraps the whole email metaphor up in the guise of the friendly phone.

Despite the fact that it's not much fun to use, there's been a huge take-up of WAP phones. We Brits do love our mobiles (we have more per head of population than most countries) and we love email – so anything that combines the two has to be a winner. The biggest problem we have with WAP is that it's a complete nightmare typing anything longer than a) 'train late', b) 'love u' or c) 'pub @ 8'.

If you're suffering from a bruised finger due to alphanumeric data entry, then the latest Nokia Communicator (the 9110) might be the answer. This nifty flip-top phone also includes a full-blown PDA (personal digital organiser), but, more importantly, it has a rudimentary QWERTY keyboard on it. If you're sending more than a couple of emails via WAP a week, then we'd recommend this unique product.

THE LAST RESORT

So you're still desperate to get a friend or relative online, but none of the set-top boxes, console add-ons, Internet TVs or connected phones appeal. What next? Surprisingly, there are still a few options. Unfortunately all of them involve leaving the house, so if you (or your friend) are agoraphobic, then you're out of luck.

The first option is to nip down to your local cybercafé and set up an email account on Hotmail. Admittedly, this does diminish one of emailing's key strengths (its immediacy) but, if it gets people online, it's OK with us. Many towns have their own Internet Cafés now (see ***netcafeguide.com/UK.htm*** for a useful index), and they're more than happy to help out complete beginners. So why not track down the one nearest to your un-wired friend/relative and point them in its direction?

More and more public libraries are now offering Internet access. The kind of access they're offering, unfortunately, tends to be a bit restricted, but it's possible to book yourself 15 minutes on the computer to check your email and respond to the important stuff.

Finally, if you're really lucky and you live in London, then you might have one of those funky, connected Internet booths near you.

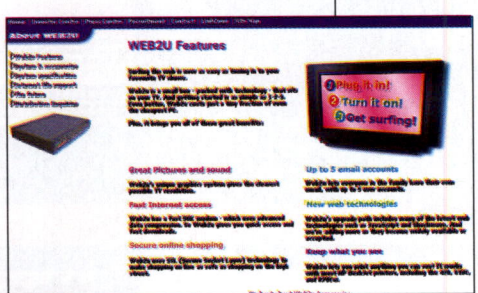
For the flash gits out there, there are a couple of nice ways of sending emails – the flashest of which has to be from the seat of an aeroplane, 26,000 feet above the Atlantic. Quite a few airlines (Singapore, Air Canada and Virgin among them) now offer Internet access via that nifty pop-out TV screen. So the next time you're stuck in a holding pattern above Heathrow and you'd really, really like to let your family know that you're going to miss your train, you can email them. Now that's progress!

RCA RW2110 **PRICE $249**
Email and chat, wireless keyboard, 56k v.90 modem, built-in printer port
www.rca.com

will, no doubt, be excellent. Over here, where the majority of people struggle along with ordinary phone lines, the PS2 will come with an optional 56k modem. Microsoft are following a similar tack with their XBox console. It will have multiplayer facilities – which means a modem – but, like Sony, it'll be optional.

And if you know someone with a Dreamcast, then you can get them online immediately by investing in its modem; then enjoy Web surfing and multiplayer gaming.

But what about people with older consoles? Datel (***www.d3world.com***), a company better known for producing 'cheat' cartridges for consoles, have come up with the World Port: a gizmo that brings limited Internet access to the Gameboy and PlayStation. The World Port, which costs a reasonable £24.99, enables gamers to send and receive email on their PSX or Gameboy. It also includes an address book, diary and world time zone clock. To use it, you need to buy World Port prepaid cards (in £5 and £10 denominations) and plug it into the phone line.



Web2U **PRICE £99**
Email, chat, audio and video compatible, infrared keyboard, 56k modem, mouse and printer ports
www.web-2u.com

KEEP TALKING

Pop into Dixons and you'll see an item with a rather familiar British name displayed in the window: the Amstrad E-M@iler is basically a phone with email connectivity. It has a mini-keyboard and a large LCD display projecting from the top, on which you can view the 700-name address book and any emails or fax messages you might want to send.

The good thing about the E-M@iler is that it adds email

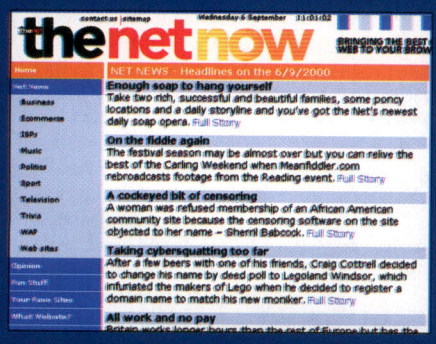
THE NET NOW

NET NEWS, FUN STUFF AND OPINION

Featuring an up-to-the-minute, geek-free Internet news service from your favourite Net magazine. We'll keep you informed of all the latest ISP and Web news as it breaks!

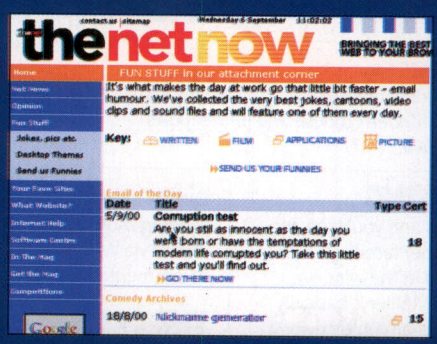
www.thenetnow.co.uk

WHAT'S INSIDE THE NET NOW?



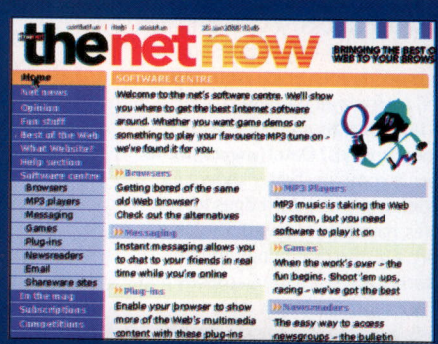
NET NEWS

All the latest Internet news updated every day: we'll bring you the latest sites, news of who's Webcasting and Webchatting where and when – plus all that's happening in the world of the Net.



FUN STUFF

Need something to pass the time? Bored at work and looking for some light relief? Check out our email attachment of the day, offering you the loudest laugh in cyberspace.



SOFTWARE CENTRE

We'll show you where to find the best software available. Whether it's for work or play, we've searched out all of the essential software to make your life online more enjoyable.

contact us | sitemap Tuesday 3 October 2:00:38

thenet now

BRINGING THE BEST OF THE WEB TO YOUR BROWSER

Home
Net News
Opinion
Fun Stuff
Your Fave Sites
What Website?
Internet Help
Starting Out
first questions
discussions
e-mail
first questions
games
Internet phrases
mac
pc
web
Learning More
Expert Guides
Software Centre
In The Mag
Get the Mag

THE ULTIMATE HELP BUTTON - starting out

first questions

What is the Internet?
Is the Internet safe for children?
Can people spy on me over the Internet?
How do I talk to other people on the Internet?
How does it work?
Who owns the Internet?
What is email?
What is the Web?
Am i safe from hackers?
Can other people read my email?
Can the Internet break?
What kind of people use the Internet?
What do I need to get connected to the Internet?

What is the Internet?
A network of computers used by more than 100 million people worldwide. It was set up in 1969 by the US government's Advanced Research Projects Agency (hence its first name: ARPANet). It was designed to hook up the most powerful computers in the US so that scientists could share them, and was designed to be able to cope with a nuclear war (just in case). Later it was opened up to include non-military departments and eventually the general public. The Internet, or Net - it's the same thing - is the product of all those who use it and is the biggest collaborative project the world has ever seen. It is constantly growing and evolving as new uses are found and more information is added. It never closes, it is nearly impossible to destroy and it takes little notice of international boundaries. It has changed the way the world works and plays together and is now part of our planet's history and future. '

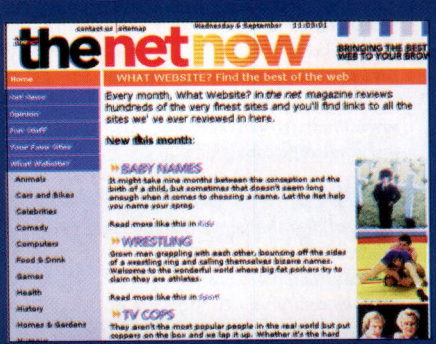
searchnow
enter keyword
Whole Site
GO FIND

BRITAIN'S BIGGEST SELLING INTERNET MAGAZINE
GET THE MAG
PRIVACY STATEMENT

Associated Sites
What Car?
Autosport Online
What Hi-Fi?
Haymarket Publishing

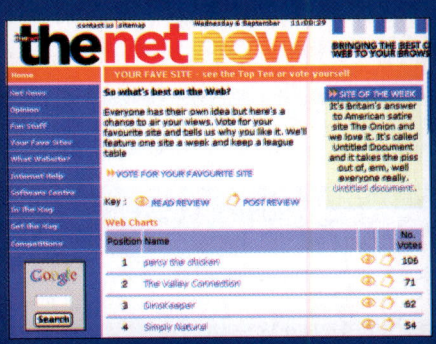
HELP SECTION

We know the Internet can be hard work. If you're struggling to know your FTP from your HTML and WWW, then don't worry. We've got all the answers for you and they're all available on our Web site. Visit the Internet Help section of The Net Now and you'll find a treasure trove of useful information at your fingertips. We'll turn you into an online guru before you know it.



WHAT WEBSITE?

With the huge number of Web addresses in *the net* each month, you could be excused from not wanting to type them all in. No worries: we've archived every site we've ever featured!



BEST OF THE WEB

What's your favourite Web site? We'll feature one Web site every week from your recommendations. Plus, we'll keep a live league table of the sites that receive the most votes from readers.

SUBSCRIBE ONLINE

So you've finished reading the magazine and you want more. We can't blame you, so we've made it easy to subscribe to *the net*. Simply fill in the form on the Web site and get your copy every month.

Web browsers

Are you using your browser to the full? And have you considered an alternative to Explorer and Navigator? Here's all you need to know

What do I use to explore the Web?

The software you use to look at pages on the Web is called a 'browser'. The most popular are Microsoft Internet Explorer and Netscape Navigator. If you have a PC running Windows 95 or 98, you will almost certainly have Internet Explorer already installed. However, Navigator and other browsers such as Opera run in much the same way.

What are my options?

Statistically, Internet Explorer is the most popular browser on the planet with almost 80 percent of the market in the UK. Netscape Navigator is still its nearest rival but lags behind considerably.

With the facilities that the two offer, it's hardly surprising that they rule the roost. Internet Explorer 5.0 is the current leader of the Internet pack. It's packed – jam-packed, in fact – with features.

Netscape Navigator 4.08 represents the only serious competition to Internet Explorer. But it still can't reach the dizzying heights of IE – in fact it's slipped so much in popularity that Web site designers now often make sure their pages look right in IE alone.

You would've thought that with the market pretty much sewn up between the big two, no-one would be foolhardy enough to attempt to write a rival browser – but there are others. Opera, for example, is a tiny little thing at 1.5Mb (compared with Netscape Communicator's 10Mb+). It's fast, but it's let down by an ugly appearance. The Opera equivalent for Macs is iCab. It has many of the excellent features of Opera, but it looks and works even better.

If you want a real rebel browser, try Lynx. It's text only, so it cuts down on download times. For children (or adults who are kids at heart), there's Surf Monkey, which lets you blow up Web pages you don't like, or gloop green paint all over them.

Saving sites in Internet Explorer

Typing in the name of a Web site every time you want to visit it can be a pain – especially if it's a long and complex name. Fortunately, all Web browsers have a way of saving the locations of sites you like, so you can revisit them without needing to retype them. In Internet Explorer these saved site addresses are called Favourites, while Netscape Navigator calls them Bookmarks.

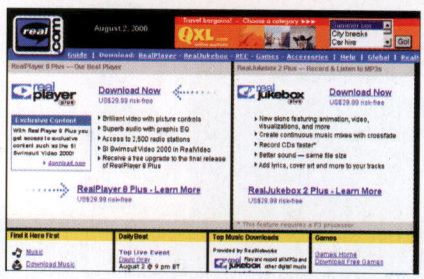
1 From the Favourites menu, choose 'Add to Favourite.' The keyboard shortcut for the move is Control D.

2 When asked whether you want to subscribe to the site, choose the 'No, just add this page to my Favourites' option. You'll see the title of the page in the 'Name' section of the site; if this is not descriptive enough for you, type a five- or six-word description of the site. Then hit OK.

3 You will now find that the site has been added to your Favourites menu. To visit the site, just click 'Favourites' and then go to the menu list and select it.

Supercharge your browser

Your basic Internet Explorer set-up comes with several 'plug-ins'. These are additional pieces of software which enable your browser to play, for example, multimedia effects. If you arrive at a site requiring a plug-in that you don't have, you'll be prompted to download and install it. The plug-ins you'll need to get the most from your browsing include: RealPlayer at ***www.real.com*** (bottom), which lets you watch videos or listen to music; Shockwave at ***www.shockwave.com*** for animation and sound; and Apple's QuickTime (below) at ***www.apple.com/quicktime/***, which plays video and sound.



Installing a plug-in

1 When you require a plug-in, a prompt appears. Click 'Get Plug-in' and you'll go to the plug-in's home page.

2 Click on the link where you can 'Get' or 'Download' the plug-in.

3 Explorer will put the plug-in inside the correct folder on your PC.

4 Go back to the site by pressing the Back button on the Explorer toolbar and enjoy it in its full glory.

Browser alternatives

Proof that there's more to browsing than Explorer or Netscape

MAC BROWSERS

BROWSER	RATING	FOR	AGAINST	DOWNLOAD FROM
ICAB	★★★★	Fast. Gets rid of irritating ad banners	Could support more features	www.icab.de
HOTJAVA	★★	Pretty showcase for Java technology	Slow; somewhat unstable	java.sun.com/products/hotjava/3.0/
INTERNET EXPLORER	★★★★	State-of-the-art browsing on the Mac	Can be memory-hungry	www.microsoft.com/Mac/IE/
LYNX	★★★★	Blazingly fast at fact-finding	If it isn't text, Lynx isn't interested	www.lirmm.fr/~gutkneco/maclynx/
NETSCAPE NAVIGATOR	★★★	It's almost as good as IE...	Doesn't display pages as prettily as IE	www.netscape.com

PC BROWSERS

AMAYA	★★	Great for those into Net standards...	...not for those who aren't	www.w3.org/Amaya/User/BinDist.html
ARACHNE	★★	It runs in DOS and is written by Czechs	A pain to set up	arachne.cz
CUSTOM BROWSER	★	Adds minimal extra customisation to IE	It's just IE with an ad in the top panel	www.custombrowser.com
HOTJAVA	★★	Pretty showcase for Java technology	Slow, though not as bad as on the Mac	java.sun.com/products/hotjava/3.0/
INTERNET EXPLORER	★★★★★	For the moment, the king of all browsers	Hard to fault, unless you really try	www.microsoft.com
LYNX	★★★★	The original text-only browser	If it isn't text, Lynx isn't interested	lynx.browser.org
MOSAIC	★★★	Good for developers	Feels old. Is old. Not updated since 1996	www.ncsa.uiuc.edu/SDG/Software/mosaic-w/
NEOPLANET	★★★★	Funky interface replacement for Explorer	Internet Explorer in new clothes	www.neoplanet.com
NETSCAPE NAVIGATOR	★★★★	Wide range of features for hardcore users	Doesn't display pages as prettily as IE	www.netscape.com
OPERA	★★★★	Faster than IE or Netscape	Looks absolutely horrible	www.opera.com
SURF MONKEY	★★★★★	Lots of fun – blowing up sites is great	Designed for smaller screens?	www.surfmonkey.com

*free 30-day trial version available

What all those browser buttons mean

Understanding the Explorer toolbar

BACK Clicking this button takes you back to the last page. Click it once and you'll go back one page, or hold to see the last 10

STOP If you decide that you don't want to view a page while it's loading, just hit Stop

HOME This button takes you to the page you viewed when you started your browser

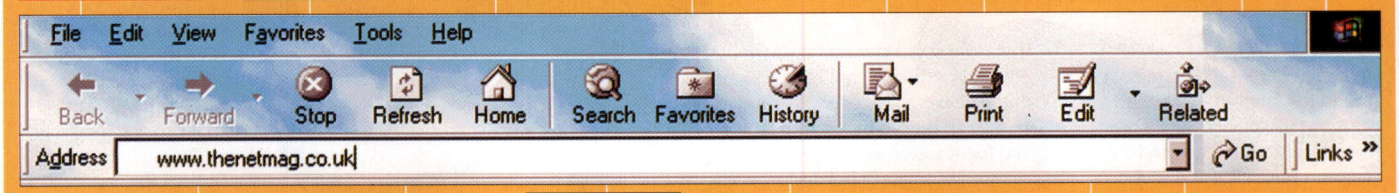
FAVOURITES Pop-up window containing a list of your Favourite sites – or you can view them from the menu

MAIL Opens your email program

PRINT Prints the page

GO When you've entered an address, hit Enter or click here to go to the site

LINKS A quick shortcut to some of your favourite sites, which you can add to



FORWARD If you've used the Back button to move back a page or two, the Forward button should take you back again

REFRESH This makes the browser redraw the page on the screen – useful if you have stopped a page from loading

SEARCH This button opens Internet Explorer's search options where you'll find short-cuts to finding what you want on the Internet

HISTORY Clicking this button produces a list of all the sites visited over the past few days or weeks – so if you found a really useful page two days ago but forgot to add it to your Favourites list, you can easily find it again by looking here

EDIT If you have a Web page editor, you can edit a Web page by clicking here

RELATED SITES Launches the Explorer 'Alexa' plug-in which provides extra search options

Viewing your browser

NETSCAPE NAVIGATOR

1 TITLE BAR Tells you the name of the site you're visiting and the program you're currently using

2 MENU BAR The range of options you can use while navigating the Internet

3 HOME PAGE BAR Click here whenever you want to return to the home page

4 ADDRESS The address of the site you're opening, including the http:// prefix

5 SEARCH ENGINE LINK Search the Internet courtesy of a link to the Google search engine

6 WEB SITE WINDOW The whole page you're opening

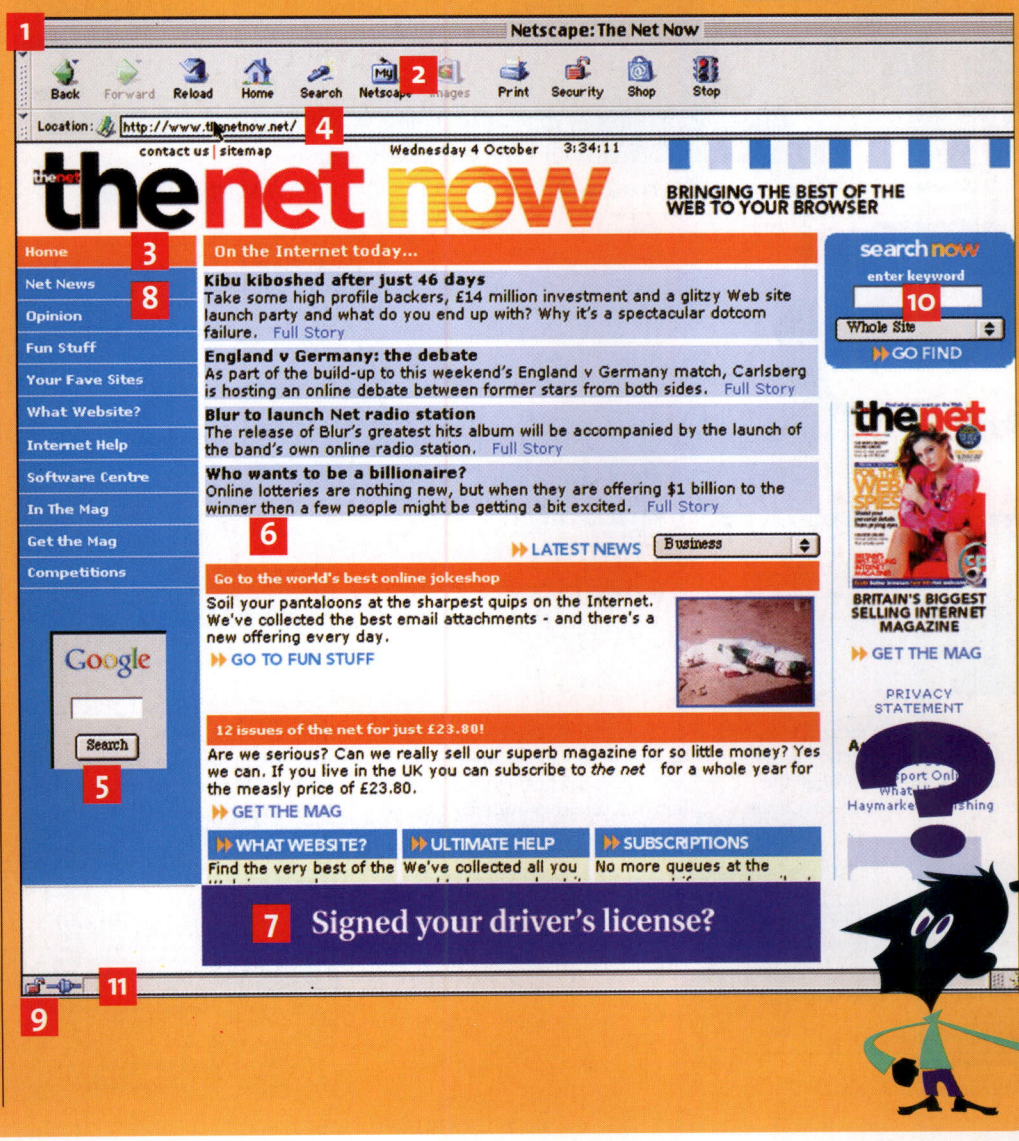
7 BANNER ADVERTISEMENT Click here to visit the service advertised in this small banner

8 INDEX What you'll find on the site. Click on an option to enter it

9 PADLOCK When this is closed, it indicates a secure site

10 SEARCH Will find something specific on the site for you

11 DOWNLOAD DATA This space tells you what Navigator is doing – or which site it could open



Email

Still not joined the email revolution? Follow our guide to Outlook Express

What is email?

Email is a way of sending messages around the Internet. While early programs could only handle plain text, most can now carry pictures and even video clips and sound.

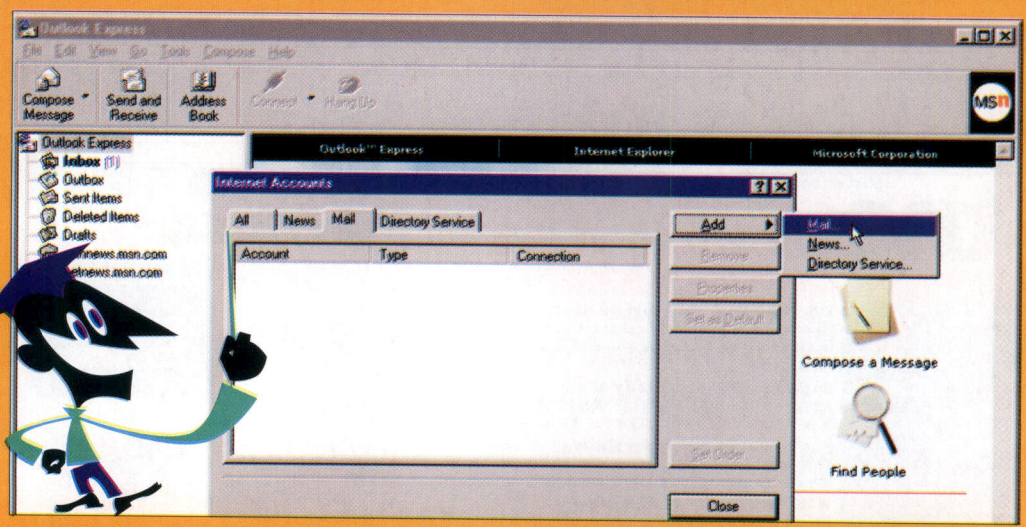
So why should I use it?

➤ It's a lot cheaper to email a friend than to phone them long distance.
➤ It's delivered almost instantly – there's no seven-day wait if you're emailing someone on the other side of the globe.
➤ You can keep in touch with family and friends, even while they're away on business or holidays – they can visit a cybercafé and check their mail from there.
➤ Many companies now rely on email as a means of communication because it's much faster and cheaper than ordinary or 'snail mail'.
➤ You can have information on your favourite subjects – whether it's fishing, the stock market, or a TV programme – delivered to your mailbox every day.

Okay, so how do I use it?

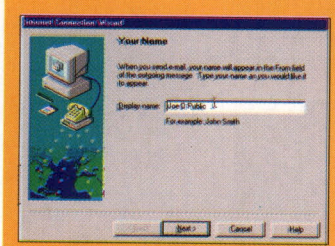
There are lots of email packages, but the one most widely used is Microsoft's Outlook Express. If you've bought a PC in the last two or three years, or you've downloaded Microsoft Internet Explorer for either Mac or PC, you'll already have Outlook Express installed. Our step-by-step guide shows you how to configure the program, create an email message, send it, and then read through the mail you've been sent.

1 Getting started with Outlook Express

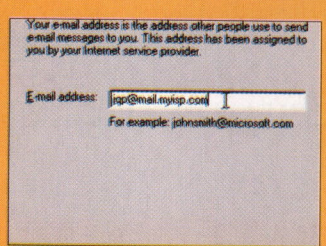


1 From the Start menu on your desktop, click Programs and then Outlook Express. If you are asked where you want it to store messages, select the pre-set or 'default' folder. The folder is kept in the Program Files folder on your hard drive.

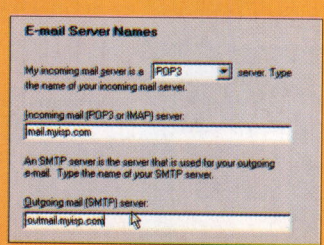
2 Once Outlook Express has loaded, go to the Accounts box from the Tools menu, and click the Mail tab shown in the picture on the left. This will show you any mail accounts you already have set up, and allows you to create a new one. For the purposes of this exercise we are going to create a new email account. Next, click Add, and select Mail.



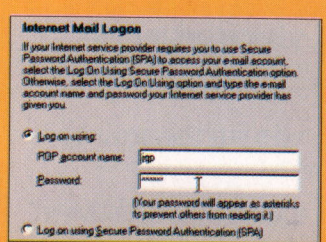
3 The Internet Connection Wizard will now guide you through the steps you need to take. First, enter your full name.



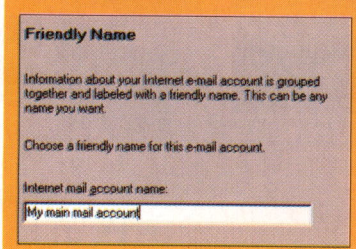
4 Type in your email address. This will have been given to you by your Internet service provider or ISP.



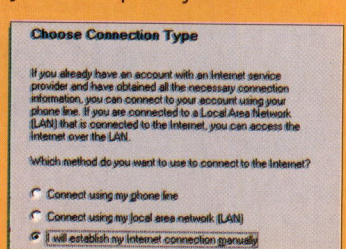
5 Enter the names of the email POP3/IMAP server in order to get incoming and outgoing mail. Call your ISP's helpline if you're unsure.



6 Type in your email address – just the part before the '@' sign – and your password. Again, your ISP should have given you these details.



7 Outlook Express asks for a 'friendly name' to give to your email account. We've called ours 'My main email account' for simplicity.



8 Outlook Express can automatically dial into your ISP for you, but it's probably best to connect manually. You can use Outlook offline, writing and managing your mail and then connect in order to send and receive messages. Choose the 'I will establish my Internet connection manually' option.

MORE EMAIL HELP AND ADVICE @ www.thenetnow.co.uk

- ★ Creating an email address book
- ★ Email etiquette
- ★ Filtering your email messages
- ★ Sending pictures and files via email

BEGINNER'S TIP

Add a 'signature' to your messages. A signature is like a calling card appended to the bottom of your email message. It might contain your email address, full name and phone number. To make one, go to the Tools menu in Outlook Express, choose Options and select Stationery and click on the Signature button. Type in the signature text you want to appear at the bottom of each message.

INTERMEDIATE TIP

Often, you'll want to pass a file to someone as part of your email message. This is known as 'attaching' the file, and is supported by most email packages. Remember that a large file will take longer to send. Compressing it using a shareware package like WinZip on the PC will shrink it, but the receiver the file will need a copy of the same program to re-expand it – so check before you send.

ADVANCED TIP

You can set up several different email accounts. Outlook Express will check each one for new mail when you go online. This is useful if you have separate work and personal email accounts. To add extra accounts, go to the Tools menu, select Options and click on New Account. Go through the 'Getting Started' steps again below, entering the new settings.

EMAIL OPTIONS If you don't want to use Outlook Express, try these alternatives for size

EUDORA LIGHT

www.eudora.com

A very popular, free email package. Includes lots of great features. Doesn't support reading news-groups, but copes happily with 'rich content email' – mail that includes sound, images and so on.

✔ **Lots of features**

✘ **None**

HOTMAIL

www.hotmail.com

A Web-based email program. Gives you a free email address, and can be accessed from any computer with a Web browser. Can also check email from a non-Web-based account.

✔ **Accessed from any computer**

✘ **You need to be online to read or compose mail**

EUDORA PRO 4.3

www.eudora.com

Commercial bigger brother to Eudora Light. Has all the features of Lite, but also allows you to check your mail from several different accounts easily.

✔ **Supports multiple mailboxes, spellchacker, email filtering**

✘ **It'll set you back nearly £30**

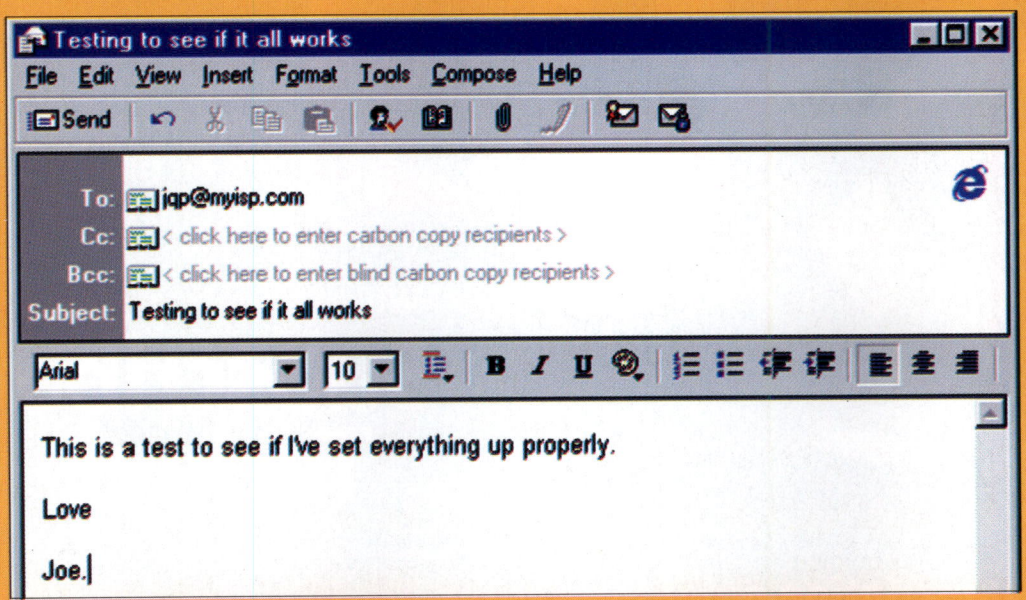
OUTLOOK 2000

www.microsoft.com Commercial bigger brother to Outlook Express. Includes an address book, to-do list and calendar, all of which link very elegantly in to the email section of the program.

✔ **Integrates well with address book, diary and scheduler**

✘ **It'll set you back around £125**

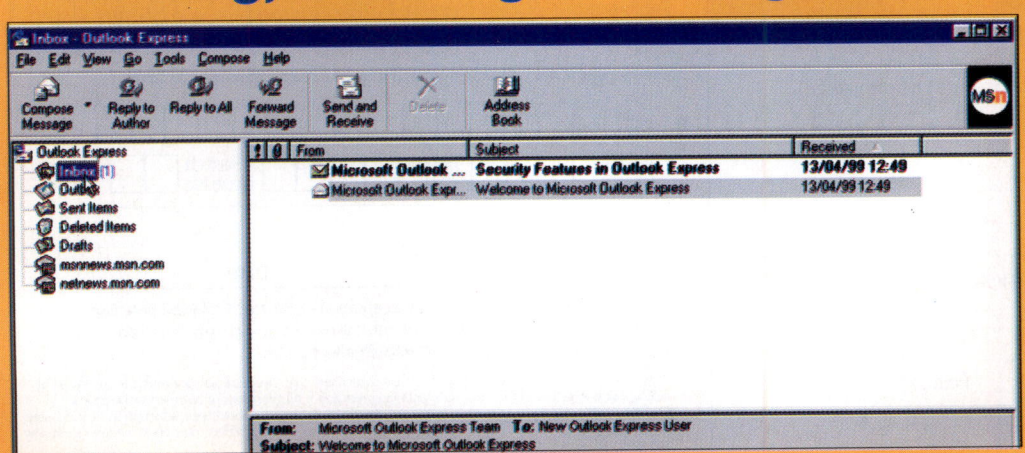
2 Composing your first email message



COMPOSING A MESSAGE

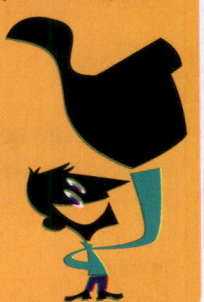
To create a message, click 'Compose Message'. If you click the small arrow just to the right, you will see that there are several pre-defined graphic message templates. But for now, just click on the button itself. Type your own email address in the 'To' field – you'll send an email to yourself to check that everything is working correctly. Enter a subject, for example 'Test Message', and in the body area just type a short message. From the File menu you can click Send to send your message now if you're online. Alternatively, if you're working offline click Send Later. This allows you to create more messages and have them ready for sending when you're ready to log on to the Net.

3 Sending, receiving & reading email



SENDING & RECEIVING MAIL

To send and receive mail, connect to the Net, then click the Send and Receive button. This will check for mail and download any new messages, at the same time sending any outgoing messages you have created. Once the program has stopped receiving mail, you can disconnect from the Net if you wish, to save phone costs. Click on In Box to the left of the screen to access the messages you have received. Click on the message to read its contents.



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- Sending your first message
- Newsgroup etiquette
- Members-only bulletin boards
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Newsgroups

Whatever your pet subject, they'll be a newsgroup devoted to it on the Net. Here's how to join it

What is a newsgroup?

Newsgroups are one of the older services on the Internet. Each group is like a bulletin board – anyone can post messages to different newsgroups, and anyone can read the postings. There are tens of thousands of different newsgroup subjects available, so there will be one that matches your interests – whether you're looking for info on beekeeping or book-keeping, computers or comics, sewing or sailing.

Why should I use newsgroups?

Although the Web has plenty of information on most subjects, newsgroups will often have more detailed answers to questions. If you have a specific question on a subject, you can have half a dozen responses in two hours.

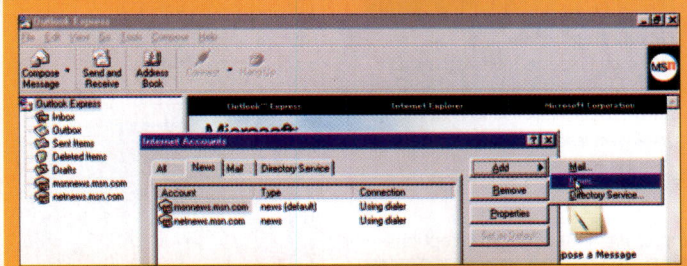
BEGINNER'S TIP

If you don't want to go to the bother of configuring Outlook Express or other newsgroup access software, visit DejaNews **www.deja.com** – a Web-based interface to newsgroups. You can read and send messages from here, all via your Web browser. Simple.

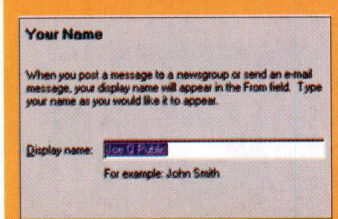
ADVANCED TIP

Your ISP will provide you with its own news server access. Mick's Place at ***web.ukonline.co.uk/mick.sz/*** has over 50 free access news server addresses. To add more servers to Outlook Express, go through the setting up steps outlined below.

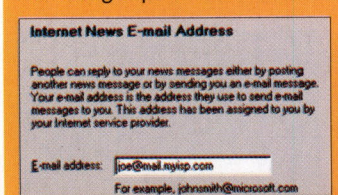
Accessing newsgroups using Outlook Express



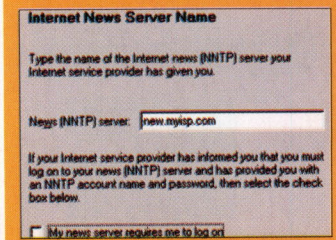
1 Go to the Accounts entry in the Tools menu, click on the News tab to list your current news accounts (if any), hit Add and choose News.



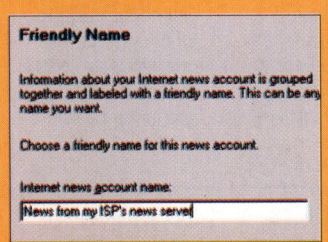
2 Type in your name. This will be displayed in any message you post to a newsgroup. Then hit Next.



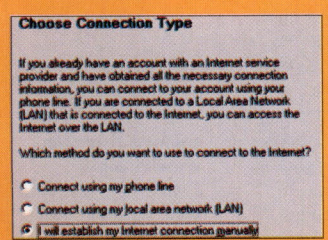
3 Type in your email address. This will be displayed in any message you post. Then click Next.



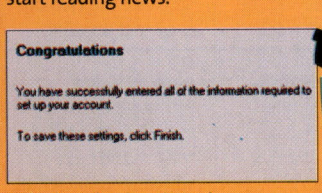
4 Enter the name of your ISP's server which should be given in your user documentation.



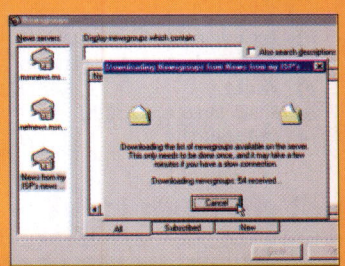
5 Give the news server a name that makes sense to you.



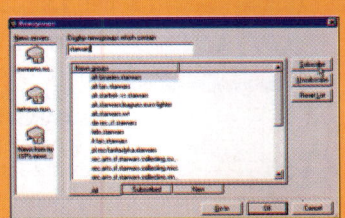
6 Tell Outlook Express that you will dial your ISP manually before you start reading news.



7 And you're done! You have now set up a newsgroup access account. Now let's see how to use it.

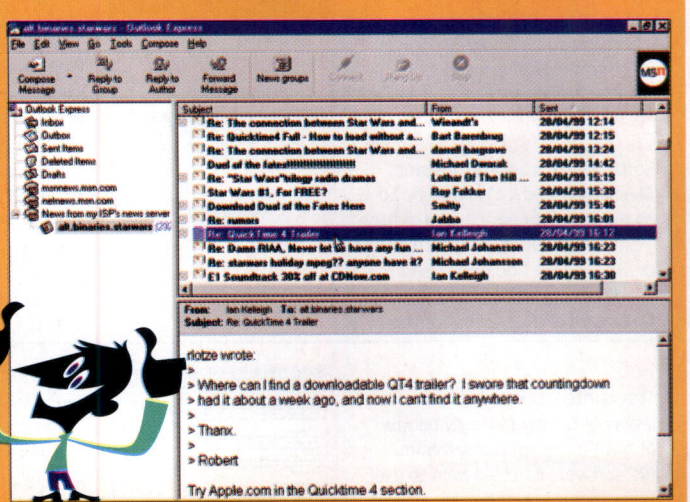


8 After hitting Close, you're asked if you want to download your ISP's list of newsgroups. When you click Yes, the list will be downloaded – so make sure you're online. This can take up to 10 minutes when you first connect to your news server because you are downloading the names of thousands of newsgroups.



9 Once all the newsgroups are downloaded, you can explore. If you want to find *Star Wars* postings, for example, type 'starwars' into the text field at the top of the window to display all newsgroups containing that word. You can subscribe to as many groups as you want.

10 To access a message inside a newsgroup, click on the subject header to read a summary. Double click the header and the whole message downloads, appearing on the lower half of the screen.



11 If there is a '+' sign by the message header this means there are replies to this message which you can also read. Click on the '+' sign to list the replies.

Online chat

Tired of making small talk with your old mates? Our guide will show you how easy it is to make new friends online

What is online chat?

Online chat lets you communicate with others – often in real time. In other words, you type in comments, send them over the Net and they're seen almost immediately. And you're only paying for a local phone call – even if the person you are 'talking' to happens to be on the other side of the world.

What does it let me do?

- 'Chat' with friends and relatives in other countries without running up massive phone bills.
- Join in an online discussion with an expert on your favourite subject.
- Ask a celebrity questions during a moderated 'conference'.
- Talk randomly to people on the other side of the world.

DON'T PULL THAT FACE ROUND HERE

'Smileys' are a way of including some indication of emotion in your messages. They are useful when, for example, you are making a joke and you want to be sure that the person at the other end of the line realises you're not serious. Hang a relevant smiley on the end of your sentence by typing in the relevant characters – but do try not to over-use these things. To 'read' them, just turn the page 90 degrees to the left ;-) OK? Here are the four most used smileys:

- :-) The original smiley. Indicates a joke, or just a happy person!
- ;-) Wink
- :-o Shock (an open mouth)
- :-(Unhappy

BEGINNER'S TIP

Don't register your details unless you really want to

Often chat software will ask you for your name, and sometimes other info. Be wary about giving this; you don't know what they'll be used for.

INTERMEDIATE TIP

Be careful out there

If you are looking for romance online, be careful. As you would with press ads, let someone know where you're going if you meet up.

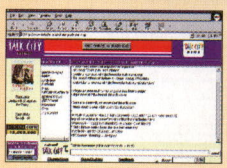
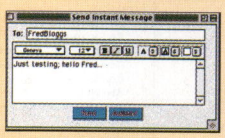
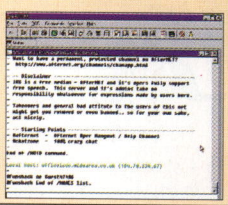
ADVANCED TIP

Go one step further

If text chat seems a bit flat, try 3D chat, where users take on a 'persona' and actually walk round chat rooms. Try ***www.thepalace.com*** for starters.

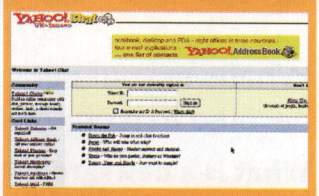
What kinds of Internet chat can I try?

There are several programs and methods for chatting online. It can get a bit confusing, so let's look at the main options

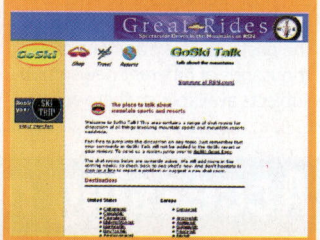
TYPE OF CHAT		FOR & AGAINST	CHAT LINK
LIVE ON A WEB SITE This kind of chat takes place within the window of your browser on a Web site. Everything you type in can immediately be seen by the other people viewing the Web page – and everything anyone else types in can be seen by you.		**FOR** Easy to use; no extra software required to run it. **AGAINST** Works on someone's Web site, so the subject will be dictated by them and private chat is unlikely.	***www.talkcity.com*** Online community where you can talk on various subjects, including romance and current affairs.
MODERATED SESSIONS Moderated chats are 'supervised' by a chat room host. In other words, you type in your message and a person sitting at the other end of the line decides whether or not to allow your comments or questions to be displayed. This is the norm for celebrity chats.		**FOR** Discussions are sensibly run. Plonkers may be screened out. **AGAINST** Only take place at certain times because they require a moderator to be present on the site. Censorship...	***chat.beeb.com*** The BBC's celebrity chat service with daily visits from the network's top stars.
REAL-TIME USING EXTRA SOFTWARE Software such as AOL's Instant Messenger and ICQ allow you to chat with other people in real time – either a group of people together, or one-on-one. You don't use a Web browser; dedicated software takes care of everything for you.		**FOR** Instant response; you can chat privately to one person. **AGAINST** Requires extra software; some firms don't allow this to be installed on their PCs, so you may not be able to chat at work.	***www.aol.co.uk/aim*** ***www.icq.com*** Chat one-to-one with your friends in real time on the Net. AOL's Instant Messenger and ICQ software are two of the most popular.
IRC This is Internet Relay Chat. It's a way of talking to many people at once using special software. IRC software can be a pain to use, however – it was, after all, modelled on Citizens' Band radio.		**FOR** Useful, technical chats are often held on IRC channels. **AGAINST** Software is difficult to use; IRC users can be impatient with newcomers.	***www.mirc.com*** Although it can be tricky to get used to, mIRC is the best software for IRC chat. ***www.ircle.com*** IRC client for Macs.

CHAT ROOMS

Want to have a yarn about some of the subjects you've read about in *the net* this month? Try these

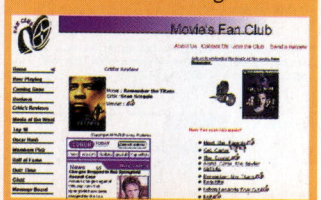


uk.chat.yahoo.com
Chat about anything that takes your fancy in Yahoo's chat rooms



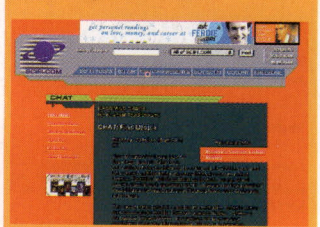
www.goski.com/talk.htm
Discuss anything to do with mountain sports here

www.funny.co.uk
A great place to find comedy news and share the latest laughs



www.unni.com/movies/index.php3
A place to find like-minded film buffs and rate the latest flicks

www.pinn.net/~royaloak
Seen a spook? Why not share your tale of fright here?



www.scifi.com/chat
A place to chat with sci-fi know-it-alls – from authors to actors

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12 issues £40.80 £34.00
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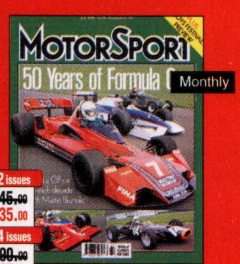

Monthly

12 issues £45.00 £35.00
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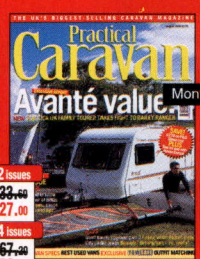
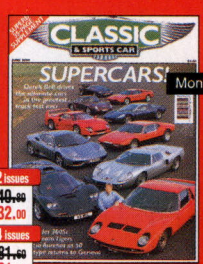


Monthly

12 issues £23.60 £27.00
24 issues £67.20 £52.00

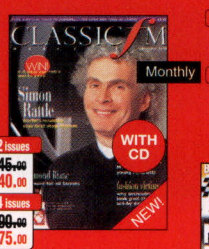


Monthly

12 issues £40.80 £32.00
24 issues £81.60 £61.00

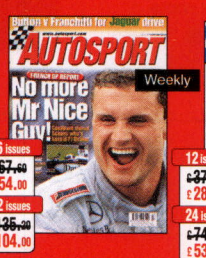
Monthly

12 issues £35.40 £31.80
24 issues £70.80 £63.70



Monthly

12 issues £45.00 £40.00
24 issues £90.00 £75.00



Weekly

26 issues £67.60 £54.00
52 issues £135.20 £104.00

Monthly

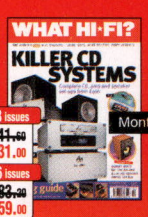
12 issues £27.20 £28.00
24 issues £74.40 £53.00

Weekly

26 issues £41.60 £33.00
52 issues £83.20 £64.00

Monthly

12 issues £32.00 £23.80
24 issues £66.00 £47.00



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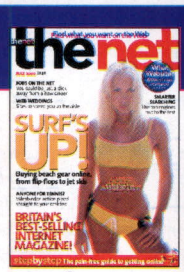

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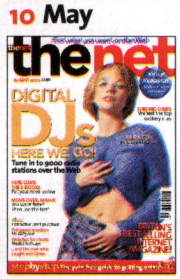

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CLAIRE GOBIN

This Chester-based violinist has turned herself into the world's first Internet busker

How does your Web site, *www.clairegobin.co.uk*, work?
You can download a video of me busking on the streets of Chester and, if you like what you hear, log back on and send me a donation. I've received cash from Australia, America, Japan and South America.

Where does my donation go?
Straight into my bank account. I need the money – I've just finished recording my next CD.

How much money have you received via the site?
About £500 so far – as much as I could earn on a really good day in Chester.

Good Lord! It's a wonder you even bother with the Internet...
The site is driving my career! It's such an affordable way for unsigned artistes like myself to promote ourselves. I've sold over 5000 copies of my first CD online, as it's illegal for me to sell CDs while I play. You read all these stories about Web sites going bust, so I was really shocked to find I was making money! Mind you, it didn't cost much to set up: a mate designed the site and I recorded my own MP3s.

Has the Web brought you fans from far and wide?
I found the backing band for my next album, *Claire Gobin at the Rainbow Rooms*, thanks to the Net. They're a jazz band based in New York who were looking for a violinist. They were able to go to my site, listen to what I sound like and see me play.

Who shot the videos of you in action?
The boyfriend! He just used a Sony digital camera.

Do you think we'll ever see other traditional street 'entertainers' moving onto the Web? A Webcam of the silvery robotic man, perhaps, or those blokes who do chalk drawings on the pavement?
I don't know if it would work. Would anyone be bothered to see if the robotic man had moved?

Finally, as we speak, it's raining cats and dogs down south. Is it busking weather up there in Chester?
I've been playing indoors today, at the Grosvenor Shopping Precinct. It's great; I've never been moved on. But my dream is that one day I'll do all my busking over the Net. No more being cold ever again!

Claire's latest single, *Nothing To Lose*, is available as a free download from ***www.clairegobin.co.uk.***

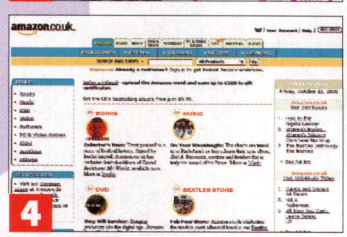
WORDS: MATTHEW BINGHAM

CLAIRE'S BEST OF THE WEB

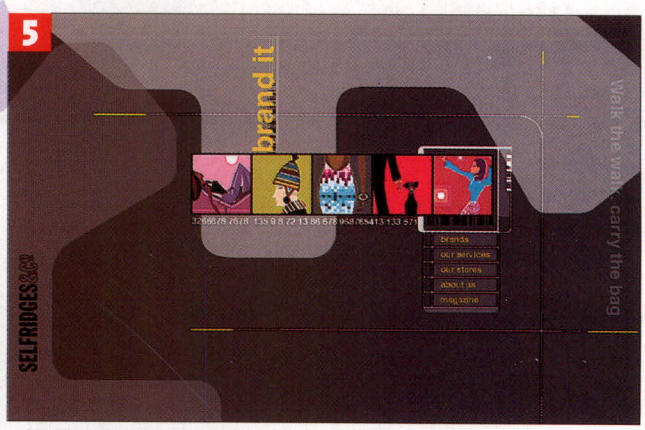
1 DOTMUSIC *www.dotmusic.co.uk*
When she's not playing her own tunes, Claire keeps an ear out for other new artists. 'I always read Dotmusic's reviews when I'm looking for CDs.'

2 EGG
www.egg.co.uk
'I'm on the move all the time, so it's good to be able to check my bank account to see if any donations have come in.'

3. LASTMINUTE.COM
www.lastminute.com
The Chester streets can get a bit nippy in winter. 'Sometimes it's all too much and I have to get away!', Claire says.



4 AMAZON
www.amazon.co.uk
Music isn't Claire's only artistic passion: 'I read a lot, so this is perfect. *Birdsong* was the last book I bought.'



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